JEWISH MERCHANT ADVENTURERS

A Study of the Radanites

By

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PART I

THE ECONOMIC AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Among the many steps taken by Abdal-Malik, the fifth of the Ommayad Caliphs (691–705) for the organisation and good government of his rapidly extending realm was the institution of a regular post-service from his capital Damascus to the provincial capitals. This service was primarily meant for government dispatches, but it naturally helped to facilitate communications in general. The postmasters were charged with the duty of informing the Caliphs of all important news in their respective districts.[1]

Al-Mansur, the second of the Abbaside Caliphs (754–775), founded the city of Baghdad, which at once became the capital of the Eastern Caliphate[2] and the new hub of routes which radiated to all parts of the Empire. With this sole difference the system instituted by Abdal-Malik remained. A popular writer gives the following description of the use and the extension of this system of communications during the reign of the best known of all the Caliphs, Haroun al-Raschid (763–809). "The postal service was the centre of the vast espionage system.

[1] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 13th ed., art. Caliphate V. 33.
[2] *Histoire des Dynasties Mussulmanes*. Archives Marocains, Vol. XVI; Paris, 1910; p. 262.

Historians credit Ja'far's[3] father with having organised the postal system on a new basis. In Haroun's time each provincial capital had a post-office, and routes connected the imperial capital with the leading centres of the Empire. Mules and horses were used in Persia, camels in Syria and Arabia. . . . The postal headquarters in Baghdad had itineraries of the whole Empire indicating the various stations. The elaborate road system which radiated from the imperial capital was an inheritance from the earlier Persian Empire."[4]

About half a century after the death of Haroun al-Raschid[5] one of these provincial postmasters was Aboul Kassim Obaid Allah ibn Khordadbeh. Ibn Khordadbeh was the son of the Governor of Tabaristan, and was born between 820 and 830. He served under the Caliph Mutammid (869–885) as Sahib Al-Barid W'al Kabar, "Director of Posts and Police",[6] in the Province of Djibal, the ancient Media. Through his province there ran the most famous and longest of all the trade routes of the Eastern Caliphate, the Khorasan Road,[7] and in Jibal was the city of Ray, the chief town of one of the four quarters of the province, the ancient Rhages of Tobit, and a centre of trade.[8] He died, according to Hadidji Khalifa, about 912.[9]

[3] Ja'far the Barmecide, vizier to Haroun al-Raschid.

[4] John, Prince Loewenstein, in *Everybody*, August 5th, 1944. This passage enables us to realise the ease of communications in the Caliphate immediately prior to, and during, the period of the Radanites. In fact Haroun al-Raschid with his embassies to Charlemagne in the West and the Chinese Emperor in the East provides the sole parallel to the travels of the Radanites. See later.

[5] Adler gives the date of Khordadbeh's Book as 817, Roth 847, Baron 870. I have adopted the dates given by De Goeje, according to whom he began his book in 846–7 and completed it between 885–6. Cf. *Encyclopaedia of Islam* II, 398, and Beazley, *Dawn of Modern Geography*, 1, 425.

[6] *Not* "Postmaster General to the Caliphate of Baghdad", as Roth and others call him. See: Yule, p. 135; Sykes, *History of Exploration*, p. 48; Le Strange, p. 12.

[7] See Map, and Le Strange, Introduction.

[8] Le Strange, p. 186. Ritter, *Asien* VI, I, 595. J. E., IV, 189.

[9] *Encyclopaedia of Islam* II, 398.

Ibn Khordadbeh is famous among students of geography as the author of the *Kitab al Masalik w'al Mamalik*, "The Book of the Roads and the Kingdoms", the first book on geography by an Arab writer that has come down to us. It is in this book that the sole[10] reference to the Jewish merchants called Radanites,[11] the subject of this work, appears. The passage, headed "The routes of the Jewish Merchants called Radanites", reads as follows: "These merchants speak Arabic, Persian, Roman, the language of the Franks, Andalusians and Slavs. They journey from west to east, from east to west, partly on land, partly by sea. They transport from the west eunuchs, female and male slaves, silk, castor, marten and other furs, and swords. They take ship in the land of the Franks, on the Western Sea, and steer for Farama. There they load their goods on the backs of camels and go by land to Kolzum in five days' journey, over a distance of twenty-five parasangs. They embark in the East Sea and sail from Kolzum to el-Jar and Jeddah; then they go to Sind, India, and China. On their return they carry back musk, aloes, camphor, cinnamon, and other products of the Eastern countries to Kolzum, and bring them to Farama, where they again embark on the Western Sea. Some make sail for Constan-

[10] Jacobs, p. 197, note 1, says: "Ibn Fakih (De Goeje, V. 270) places his account of the Radanites in connection with al-Ray". I have not been able to confirm this reference. The *Jewish Encylopaedia in Russian*, Vol. XIII, p. 267, also refers to the Radanites "mentioned by some Arabic geographers". But see Appendix.

[11] First noticed by A. Sprenger in "Some passages on the early commerce of the Arabs", *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 14, Part II, 2; 1844; p. 519; then by Reinaud in his *Introduction to the Geography of Aboulfeda*, I, p. LXVIII; first translated by C. Barbier de Meynaud in *Journal Asiatique*; Paris, 1865; pp. 512 ff. The *textus receptus* is in De Goeje, *Bibliotecha Geographorum Arabicorum*; Leyden, 1889: Vol. VI: p. 114. The translation here given is that of Joseph Jacobs, *Jewish Contributions to Civilisation*, which was carefully checked by Professor I. Friedlander, a well-known Arabist. See Jacobs, p. 194, note. The text given by Roth, pp. 217 ff., is identical with that of Jacobs, except that for "the Yourts of the Toghozghor" he has, mistakenly, "Yurt and Toghozghor".

tinople to sell their goods to the Romans; others go to the palace of the King of the Franks to place their goods.

"Sometimes these Jew merchants prefer to carry their goods from the land of the Franks in the Western Sea, making for Antioch (at the mouth of the Orontes); thence they go by land to al-Jabia, where they arrive after three days' march. There they embark on the Euphrates for Baghdad, and then sail down the Tigris to al-Obolla. From al-Obolla they sail for Oman, Sind, Hind, and China. All this is connected one with another. These different journeys can also be made by land. The merchants that start from Spain to France go to Sous al-Akza, and then to Tangiers, whence they march to Kairouan and the capital of Egypt. Thence they go to al-Ramla, visit Damascus, al-Kufa, Baghdad, and Basrah, cross Ahwaz, Fars, Kirman, Sind, Hind, and arrive at China. Sometimes they likewise take the route behind Rome, and, passing through the country of the Slavs, arrive at Khamlif, the capital of the Khazars. They embark on the Jorjan Sea, arrive at Balkh, betake themselves from there across the Oxus, and continue their journey toward the Yourts of the Toghozghor, and from there to China."

As far as I am aware, this important passage, although often quoted,[12] has not been subjected to an analysis worthy of its importance, nor has the place of these merchants in

[12] For example: Joseph Jacobs, *Jewish Contributions to Civilisation*; Philadelphia, 1919; pp. 184–214: Elkan Adler, *Jewish Travellers*; London, 1930; pp. 2–3: C. Roth, *Jewish Contributions to Civilisation*; London, 1936; pp. 217–218. Cf. also: W. Heyd, *Histoire du Commerce du Lévant*; Leipzig, 1936; Vol. I, pp. 30 and 125: G. Caro, *Social-und Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Juden;* Frankfurt, 1924; Vol. I, pp. 126–127. D. Simonsen, *Les Marchands juifs appelés Radanites, Revue des Etudes Juives*, Vol. LIV; J. E., art. Commerce IV, 189: S. Katz, *The Jews in the Visigothic and Frankish Kingdoms of Spain and Gaul*; Cambridge, Mass., 1937; pp. 135–136: I. Shipper, *Jewish Economic History* (Yiddish), Vol. I; Warsaw, 1930; pp. 29–33; Heb. ed., Tel-Aviv, 1935; pp. 24–32. Idem, *Economic History of Jews in Poland* (Yiddish); Warsaw, 1926; pp. 28–35.

the general economic history, nor in the Jewish history, of their time been fully examined. Certainly this remarkable trek by four different routes across the whole of the then known world and part of the unknown[13] in pursuit of lawful trade constitutes a phenomenon to which there is no parallel in world history. But even the most remarkable phenomena have their natural causes. The activity of these traders, unique though it was, presupposes certain conditions of travel, communication and trade in the last quarter of the ninth century which made it possible for them to proceed from Christian Europe to the vast Mohammedan Empire, the largest empire which the world had seen, and thence to unknown China, then ruled by the T'ang dynasty. A consideration of the general conditions prevailing in the world at the time, and the special conditions affecting the Jews, will enable us to place these Radanite merchants in their correct historical and economic setting, and to view their travels in their proper perspective. It is to this examination that the present work is devoted. When we delve down into these causes the mystery of the Radanites disappears, and they are seen to be a natural product of the circumstances of the time. In fact, as Jacobs puts it,[14] "His (Ibn Kordadbeh's) account gives the key to the whole economic history of the Jews in the Middle Ages".

Our task is rendered none the easier by the fact that the period under review is one of the darkest in the whole of

[13] According to M. N. Adler, *Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, p. 66, note 1, Benjamin, *circa* 1170, is the first European who as much as mentions China, which is the terminus of all four routes. This is denied by Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Vol. I, 1915, p. 144, who maintains that Edrisi anticipated him. But Edrisi is still the 12th century, only some 20 years before Benjamin of Tudela.

[14] Op. cit., p. 194.

Jewish history. A pall of obscurity hangs over the whole of the ninth century, making it one of the "Dark Ages" of Jewish history in a sense different from that in which the term is applied to the Christian Europe of the same era. As far as Christian Europe is concerned, there is almost a complete absence of documents referring to Jews from Jewish sources, and those of non-Jewish origin are so sparse that a modern writer can say with truth: "We do not even know whether they (the Jews) were continually resident in France, the main country of their Western settlement, or not . . . we are without any but the most scanty material for the period from 850 to 1000",[15] and "there are few periods of Jewish history in which generalisations are so apt to replace facts as that which lies between the end of the Roman Empire and the First Crusade."[16]

Of the same period, but with especial reference to the Jews in the vast Mohammedan Empire, it is rightly stated that "the centuries between the final redaction of the Talmud and the beginning of Jewish culture in the West[17] are one of the most obscure periods in the history of the Jews of post-Biblical times. If we regard the literary productiveness of a people as the only standard by which to measure its culture, then we must confess that this was a period of decline; the Geonic period has not brought forth one monumental work."[18]

But if the period brought forth no monumental work, it did bring forth a new and unique genre of literary activity, the Responsa. These will be discussed in detail in the relevant place; suffice it in this Introduction to state that the Responsa were decisions given by the heads of the

[15] J. Parkes, *The Jews in the Medieval Community;* London, 1938; p. 19.
[16] Ibid., p. 23.
[17] i.e. from 500–1000 A.D.
[18] L. Ginsberg, *Geonica*, Vol. I; 1909; Preface, p. VII.

Babylonian academies to the far-flung communities of the Mohammedan, and to a lesser extent the Christian, world. Their number is enormous. In 1891 J. Muller[19] registered 2,400, of which no less than 1,000 are from one Gaon; since that time the remarkable discovery of the hoard of manuscripts in the Cairo Geniza has vastly increased their number.[20]

The remarkable growth of the Responsa was the result of the expansion of the Empire[21] and of the facilities for communication, and has thus a direct bearing on the Radanites. Moreover, it is that literature which furnishes the main references showing the existence of Jewish communities on the Radanite routes. As will be seen in the course of the work, the existence of such communities was probably of vital importance for the Radanite activity.

It is not out of place to point out that the darkness which enshrouds the history of the Jews in Europe and Islam during this period extended also to geography. Beazley[22] speaks of "the 9th century . . . one of the darkest periods of the Middle Ages. . . . We begin upon a ground which seems well-nigh entirely barren; we cross that desert which separates the earlier and later Middle Ages."

In addition to Christian Europe and the Islamic world, three other countries come under review, the independent Jewish kingdom of the Khazars which existed at that time and through which the fourth Route passed, and India and China to which they made their way. These will all be dealt with in the course of this work.

[19] J. Muller, *Einleitung in die Responsen der Geonen.*
[20] The main collections are: *Ginze Schechter*, by L. Ginsberg; Vol. II; New York, 1929: Idem, *Geonica;* 2 Vols.; New York, 1909: S. Assaf, *Geonic-Responsa from the Geniza*; Jerusalem, 1929: and B. M. Levin, *Ozzar Ha-Geonim* (Geonic Responsa arranged according to the tractates of the Talmud); 20 Vols. are planned, of which 12 have appeared; Haifa, Jerusalem, 1928–1941.
[21] Cf. Baron, *S.R.H.* III, 83.
[22] C. R. Beazley, *The Dawn of Modern Geography*; 1897; Vol. II, p. 1.

CHAPTER I

JEWS IN THE FRANKISH EMPIRE UNDER THE MEROVINGIANS AND THE CAROLINGIANS

SCANTY as the references are to Jews in the Frankish Empire under the Merovingians (*circ.* 550–751), they are sufficient to provide us with a tolerably clear picture of their condition, and to make it evident that a remarkable change for the better in their circumstances, and in the privileges accorded to them, took place with the advent of Charlemagne and his successors to the throne. For a general history of the Jews at this period the reader is referred to the standard history of Graetz.[1] Only the salient points, particularly those affecting their commercial activities, are given here.

Under the Merovingians we find the Jews in most of the great commercial centres of France, at Narbonne,[2] Clermont-Ferrand, Orleans, Tours, Bourges, Arles[3] and Lyons.[4] How considerable were their numbers may be gauged from the fact that at Clermont-Ferrand alone, during the massacres of 576, no less than 500 are reported to have accepted baptism in order to save their lives, to which number one must add those who lost their lives and the considerable number who fled to Marseilles.[5] In this

[1] The English edition referred to in these notes is that of the Jewish Publication Society, 1894; Merovingians, Vol. IV, Chap. 2; Carolingians, Chaps. 5 and 6. The German edition is the third, 1895; and the Hebrew, the translation by S. P. Rabinowitz, with additional notes by him and A. Harkavy, Warsaw, 1913.

[2] Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, p. 63.

[3] Ibid., p. 65. Gregory of Tours, *Histoire de France* V, 11, is a mine of information on all these places.

[4] Pirenne, *Medieval Cities*, pp. 18–19.

[5] Gregory of Tours, loc. cit.

town, which was their centre,[6] and in Narbonne, their numbers were even greater.[7] In 589 the population of Narbonne is said to have consisted of Goths, Romans, Jews, Greeks and Syrians.[8]

The persecution of 576 referred to, instituted by Avitus, Bishop of Arverna, the seat of whose see was at Clermont-Ferrand, was by no means an isolated instance of cruelty and ill will. On the contrary, it can be said to have provided the pattern for the sufferings of the Jews under the Merovingians. In 591 Gregory the Great was obliged to reprove the clergy of Arles and Marseilles for forcibly baptising Jews.[9] "The later Merovingian kings became more and more bigoted and this hatred of the Jews consequently increased. Clotaire II . . . sanctioned the decisions of the Council of Paris which forbade the Jews to hold magisterial power or to take military service",[10] and it was under his son Dagobert that the fortunes of the Jews in the Frankish kingdom reached their nadir. In 629 he issued a decree under which the whole Jewish population had to submit to baptism or death.[11]

When we turn to their commercial activities, the salient fact which emerges is that the Jews shared with the Byzantines, called Syrians, the international trade of the kingdom, which was chiefly, if not even exclusively, in their joint hands. "Maintaining friendly relations with their co-religionists in Italy, Spain and the East, they (the Jews) were able to give a wide extension to their business"[12]; and in every reference to the business activities of the Jews the names mentioned are coupled with those of Syrians.

[6] Ibid.

[7] *Camb. Med. Hist.* II, 156.

[8] Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum . . . collectio*, Vol. IX, cols. 1015 and 1017; cf. Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, p. 63.

[9] Pirenne, *Mah.*, p. 65.

[10] Graetz, *Engl.*, III, p. 40.

[11] Ibid. *Ger.* V, p. 52.

[12] *Camb. Med. Hist.* II, 156.

There can be no doubt but that the navigation of the Mediterranean was jointly shared by these two peoples.[13]

The picture given to us is one of comparatively large settlements of Jews in the great commercial centres of France, sharing with the Syrians the international trade of the Empire, and subjected to successive and increasing disabilities and persecution which culminated in their forced baptism, on pain of death, under Dagobert in 629.

Already in the time of Pepin the Short, father of Charlemagne (741–768), we get the first glimmerings of a change for the better in the fortunes of the Jews in the Frankish Empire; nor is it difficult to specify the cause to which this change is to be attributed. For, as will be related in the next chapter, between the reign of Dagobert the Merovingian and Pepin, the father of Charlemagne, that epoch-making event which was decisively to alter the whole economic and political structure of Europe, the Mohammedan conquest of the Mediterranean and of Spain, had taken place. The first recorded contact between this vast new empire and the Frankish kingdom was established in a manner which presaged the famous embassy of Charlemagne to Haroun al-Raschid. The Abbaside Caliph of Baghdad, troubled by the revolt in Spain under the Ommayad prince Abdurrahman, sent an embassy to Pepin to enlist his aid and seek an alliance with him against the rebels,[14] and it was the same Pepin who first made a grant of hereditary domains to the Jews of his empire.[15] The connection between these two events will be made clear later.

The improvement in the fortunes of the Jews thus commenced under Pepin was consummated by his son

[13] Pirenne, op. cit., pp. 62 ff.
[14] Oman, *The Dark Ages*, p. 333.
[15] Katz, p. 162.

Charlemagne and his Carolingian successors. From being a hopelessly persecuted sect, at the mercy of Church and State, they became the powerful and influential *protegés* of their royal masters. The Church was still vehement and virulent in its opposition to them, an opposition which grew with the growth of their influence, but whereas the Merovingians had acted as the docile instruments of the Church in their discriminatory legislation against the Jews, the Carolingians not only resisted every attempt of the Church to discredit them, but actively took their part against it. And one of these kings was Louis the Pious, Saint Louis, the darling of the Church! The improvement went so far as to justify the statement that during this period they enjoyed "wide toleration, perhaps more than at any period of their history".[16]

A close study of the documents makes one fact absolutely certain. It is that practically without exception their favourable position and privileges are connected with trade facilities. Every single extant charter of Louis the Pious makes specific reference to this fact, and nearly every mention of the Jews, favourable or hostile, under the Carolingians generally is connected with their trading activities, especially in the field of international trade and travel.[17]

[16] Graetz, *Engl.* III, p. 163.
[17] It is true that the appointment of the remarkable "Nasi of Narbonne", the semi-autonomous Jewish "King of Narbonne", is described by the Roman de Philomene or Gesta Caroli Magna Ad Carcassonam et Narbonam as "a reward of Charles to the Jews for the part they had taken in the capture of the city". According to this account he granted them for their own use one-third of the city and the right to live under a "Jewish king". The Gesta, however, is regarded as a late and unhistorical document. In a document which existed in the Abbey de la Grasse before the French Revolution it was stated that under the Emperor Charlemagne a "king of the Jews" owned a section of Narbonne, a possession which Charlemagne confirmed in 791. Two Hebrew texts confirm this grant: (1) the Seder Ha-Kabala of Abraham ibn David (d. 1180), see Neubauer, *Med. Jew. Chronicles* I, 82; (2) the Milhemet Mitzvah of Meir b. Simon of Narbonne (1240), see Neubauer, pp. 98–100. For

Thus under Charlemagne we have the famous incident of the Jew Isaac heading the embassy to Haroun al-Raschid which took four years (797–801) on its journey to him and brought back to France the first elephant ever seen in Europe, on July 20th, 802,[18] while the Gesta Karoli relates the story of the Jewish merchant who often visited Palestine and who was prevailed upon by Charlemagne to play a trick on a worldly bishop. As Caro[19] points out, the pretty picture of chaffering and bargaining between the merchant and the bishop is almost certainly based on a real incident.

Charlemagne himself had paid great attention to the maintenance of freedom of circulation within his domains, and issued edicts in favour of pilgrims and traders, Jew and Christian, and the capitularies of his successors attest the fact that they remained faithful to that policy.[20] His successor, Louis the Pious (814–840), issued the first extant charters granted to the Jews, which are of very great interest. There are five of them, although others also must undoubtedly have been given.[21] Three were granted before 825, one to Rabbi Domatus and his nephew Samuel, one to David Davitis, Joseph, and their kinsmen in Lyons, and one to Abraham of Saragossa in Spain. This one is of special interest, since not only does it contain mention of the fundamental point upon which the whole possibility of the Radanite Routes depended, the ability of the Jews to move from Christian France to Moslem Spain,[22] but it

all above see Katz, pp. 159–160. It seems obvious that the grant was an historical fact, as is certainly the existence of the Nasi of Narbonne, but the Gesta attributes it to military exploits, the only reason which would suggest itself to the author.

[18] See Caro, *Wirtschaftgeschichte* I, 129–130; *Routes of the Radanites*, p. 267, note 67; *Aronius Regesten*, 71. For the statement that a Jew Machir accompanied the return embassy from Baghdad, see Chap. 19.

[19] Op. cit., pp. 128–129.

[20] Pirenne, *Medieval Cities*, p. 132.

[21] Katz, p. 87.

[22] See Chapter IX.

differs from those given to Christian merchants just in those details which the needs of international travel demanded. For instance, freedom from imposts of travel is specifically mentioned.[23] A fourth charter, given to certain Jewish merchants in 828, explicitly states that they were not to be harmed or robbed of their ships on the pretext that they were needed for the king, a clause the importance of which will be discussed later,[24] while a fifth, in 839, confirmed a grant of land to Gaudiocus and his sons Jacob and Vivacius.[25]

Generally speaking, the position of the Jews under Louis the Pious was even better than under Charlemagne. They had the right of settling in any part of the kingdom,[26] they were exempted from trial by ordeal, and "a characteristic protective law seems to have been developed for the Jews".[27] Both the extent and the reason for these privileges are clearly seen in the astonishing and well-nigh incredible steps which were taken to meet the wishes of the Jewish traders. The market-day was changed, out of regard to their susceptibilities, from Saturday, their Sabbath, to—Sunday![28]

Our authority for this statement is no other than Agobard, Bishop of Lyons (816–840), who, throughout the whole period of his bishopric, which is almost exactly contemporaneous with the reign of Louis the Pious, carried on a strenuous and unremitting, but losing, battle against the growing influence and power of the Jews. One incident

[23] Cf. Caro I, p. 133.

[24] Cf. Chapter X.

[25] For the charters generally see Katz, pp. 87 and 95; cf. also Pirenne, p. 234; Caro I, p. 133.

[26] Graetz, *Ger.*, V, p. 206.

[27] Katz, p. 85.

[28] The relevant passage merits quotation in the original: "Mercata, quae in sabbatis solebant fieri, transmutari praeceperunt (missi regis)—dicentes hoc Christianorum utilitati propter diei dominici vocationem congruere—ne sabbatismus eorum (Judaeorum) impediretur". Agobard, p. 65, quoted by Graetz, *Ger.*, V, p. 206, note 4.

in his career illustrates strikingly the difference in the position of the Jews under the Merovingians and under their successors. A heathen slave-girl escaped from her Jewish master in Lyons. She became baptised, but despite her acceptance of Christianity her master demanded her return. Agobard refused to give her up. The Jew thereupon appealed to Eberhart, the *magister Judaeorum*, an official specifically charged with the protection of the Jews and their interests. He upheld the contention of the Jew, and on Agobard's continued refusal the case was referred to the king, Louis the Pious. The king demanded the return of the slave, and Agobard was sent back in disgrace to Lyons.[29]

Agobard, in his *Opuscules*, which were edited between 822 and 830, furiously inveighs against the wealth of the Jews and their high standing at court, as does his contemporary Amulo, and his whole diatribe shows that it is the big merchants whom he is attacking.[30]

What of the Byzantine merchants called Syrians who, under the Merovingians, occupy such a prominent place in the commerce of the time, and who are always coupled with the Jews? It was maintained by the friends of the Jews that they were entitled to consideration and respect because of their descent from the patriarchs and the fact that they belonged to the same people as the prophets. To this Agobard retorts quite logically: Why not then extend the same consideration to the Arabs who are also descendants of Abraham?[31] This mention of Arabs is, however, no more than a debating point, for the remarkable fact,

[29] Ibid., pp. 209–210.

[30] Pirenne, p. 234. Katz (p. 126) suggests, but on very slender evidence, that this wealth may have come from land and landed property as well. His reason is probably the fifth charter referred to above.

[31] Graetz, *Ger.*, V, 217.

which will be fully discussed and explained in the next chapter, is that under the Carolingians the Syrian merchants completely disappear from the scene of trade, and the trade which they shared with the Jews under the Merovingians becomes a Jewish monopoly under their Carolingian successors. The Syrians disappear while the Jews remain and grow in influence and power. As Pirenne points out, there is not a single text which as much as mentions the presence of Syrians or their commodities after the eighth century,[32] and he emphatically denies that they continued their activities in Gaul and Italy after the Arab conquest of Spain. The most that can be said is that some refugees went to Italy.[33]

Under Charles the Bald, the position of the Jews remained as favourable as under his predecessors,[34] and one of his decrees, in 864, that, for counterfeiting, "Coloni" and slaves were to be whipped, while Jews and freemen were to pay a fine in gold,[35] is eloquent proof of their high status. It was not until about 900, a date which is almost identical with the cessation of the activity of the Radanites,[36] that their position commences to deteriorate.[37]

In point of fact, the more one considers the position of the Jews in the Frankish dominions under the Carolingians, the more irresistibly one is led to the conclusion that not only was that position due mainly to the mercantile abilities of the Jewish traders of the period, but that these abilities

[32] *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, p. 148. "Scheffer-Boichorst would include by analogy the Syrians with the Jews mentioned in this account (Ibn Khordadbeh's account of the Radanites). Thompson indeed attempts to supply from the analogy the proof which has been lacking for the existence of Syrian merchants in Carolingian Gaul. He maintains that the word *Cappi* mentioned in a capitulary refers to Syrian merchants. . . . Ingenious as this etymology is, it fails because of the very wording of the capitulary invoked. . . . Pirenne points out that the context does not permit the translation of *cappi* as Syrians." Katz, pp. 134–135.

[33] Op. cit., p. 147.

[34] Graetz, *Ger.*, V, p. 206.

[35] Katz, p. 86.

[36] See Chapter XXI.

[37] Graetz, loc. cit.

secured for them a virtual monopoly of such international trade as existed. This is surely the only explanation possible of the change of the market day from the Jewish to the Christian Sabbath, coupled with the establishment of local markets at which Jewish traders were active.[38] The Jews continued the activity carried on by their co-religionists before the Islamic invasion, and if the scale was greatly diminished,[39] on the other hand they had the advantage of a monopoly. From the time of the Carolingians the words *Mercator* and *Judaeus* were synonymous,[40] and the Jew is, by and large, the professional merchant of Carolingian times.[41] On the basis of the available evidence, one must agree with Pirenne that "if the Jews were so favoured, it was only because they were indispensable".[42] It is neither unfair nor cynical to find in the remark of a medieval Rabbi, "What benefit have the Gentiles in keeping us in their midst if not their own material advantage",[43] the clue to the medieval "tolerance" shown to the Jews. If they were favoured, and they were, it was because of their indispensability as the vehicles of international trade, the sole avenue whereby products of the East found their way to the Christian West. Many of the Jews in the Frankish Empire were expressly admitted on the explicit or implicit condition that they would maintain contact with Eastern lands.[44] For the present it is sufficient to quote the words of Graetz in this connection: "World trade . . . was then mainly in the hands of the Jews, for at that time, before the roads were open to international trade, and greater

[38] Katz, p. 129.
[39] Pirenne, p. 233.
[40] "Mercator, id est, Judaeus". M. G. H., *Capitulari*, Vol. II, p. 252.
[41] Pirenne, *M. et C.*, p. 237.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Israel Isserlein, *Terumat Ha-Deshen*, para. 342, p. 134.
[44] Cf. Baron, *S. R. H.*, I, 323.

than the distance of space was the distance of thought, it was easy for the Jews to establish contact with their co-religionists in distant lands. This it was which enabled them to strengthen the foundations of their international trade."[45] It was for this reason that they were placed directly under the protection of the kings. They were forbidden to be tried except "*secundum legem eorum*", and murder of a Jew entailed a fine to the royal *camera*.[46] We see in this regulation the germ of that idea which later established the legal status of the medieval Jews as *servi camerae*.

The actual extent of the Carolingian Empire also had a close bearing on the activities of the Radanites. Charlemagne vastly enlarged the territory of the Frankist realm by the annexation of the kingdom of Lombardy, the Spanish March, Saxony and the Slavonic lands of the Elbe and the Drave.[47] His conquest of Saxony and Bavaria, which was completed by 800, brought nearly all Western Christianity into his hands.[48] "Enlarged by conquest until it extended to the Elbe and the Danube in the East, and to Benevento and the Ebro in the South, the Frankish monarchy comprised nearly the whole of the Christian Occident . . . and in actual fact the power of Charlemagne extended to all countries and all peoples that recognised in the Pope of Rome the Vicar of Christ and the Head of the Church".[49] The Jews naturally profited by this extension of the kingdom. With the freedom granted to them to take up residence wheresoever they desired, and as a result of their generally favourable position in the

[45] *Heb.* III, p. 238.
[46] Pirenne, *M. et C.*, p. 233.
[47] Oman, *The Dark Ages*, p. 343.
[48] Pirenne, *Mah. et Charl.*, p. 209.
[49] Ibid., *History of Europe*, pp. 86–87.

Franco-German Empire, "the Jews were permitted to undertake voyages and carry on business . . . they were also able to abandon themselves to their inclination for travel, and thus spread through many of the provinces of Germany. In the ninth century numbers of them dwelt in the towns of Magdeburg, Merseburg and Ratisbon. From these points they penetrated further and further into the countries inhabited by the Slavonians on the further side of the Oder, as far as Bohemia and Poland."[50]

Without the spread of these Jewish communities eastwards consequent upon the conquests of Charlemagne, the fourth route of the Radanites would probably have been impossible.[51]

Thus our sources give us a picture of the Jews under the Carolingians enjoying a freedom and a tolerance to which there is no parallel in their history. Their trade rivals, the Syrians, had been eliminated, with the result that they possessed virtually a monopoly, and their indispensability procured them corresponding privileges. Taking advantage of the extension of the Empire and their freedom to reside wherever they desired, they spread eastwards from the Rhine valley across Germany, Bohemia and Poland. And this period of the Carolingians was the period of the activity of the Radanites.

[50] Graetz, *Engl.* III, p. 144.
[51] See Chapter XV.

CHAPTER II

THE BLOCKING OF THE TRADE ROUTES

WHAT were the general conditions in Europe during the period of the Carolingians which caused this remarkable transformation in the position of the Jews of Christian Europe, which eliminated their erstwhile rivals, the Syrians, from the international trade of the time, leaving a monopoly in the hands of the Jews, a monopoly which, as has been stated, procured for them unparalleled privileges?

The answer to this question was first propounded by the famous Belgian economic historian, H. Pirenne, who, in 1928, at the History Congress of Oslo, startled the learned world by a new and convincing explanation of the transformation of Europe which took place between the time of Constantine and that of Charlemagne. In a series of works,[1] culminating in his epoch-making *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, he throws an entirely new light upon the circumstances which, causing a complete rupture and breakdown of international trade,[2] ushered in the Dark Ages, as a result of which "Western Europe sunk back into a purely agricultural state", a state in which "Land was the sole source of subsistence and the sole condition of wealth. All classes of the population, from the Emperor who had no other revenues [depended upon it]. . . . Movable wealth no longer played any part in economic life. All

[1] (*a*) *Medieval Cities, their Origins and the Revival of Trade*, tr. Halsey; Princetown, 1925. (*b*) *Economic and Social History of Europe*; London, 1936. (*c*) *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, 2nd ed.; Paris, 1937; cf. also *A History of Europe*, tr. B. Miall; London, 1939.
[2] With the sole exception of the Radanites.

social existence was founded on property or the possession of land."[3]

Pirenne completely explodes the theory hitherto universally held that it was the irruption of the barbaric Germanic hordes from the north into the Roman Empire which signalised, and was the cause of, the commencement of the Dark Ages. This irruption, while it brought about certain readjustments of the northern frontiers of the Empire, and cut off Brittany and England from contact with that Empire, effected no fundamental changes in the essential character of "Romania", the lands under the influence of Rome. Until the end of the Merovingian period these essential characteristics remain unchanged. They are determined by the unity of the Mediterranean Sea and the freedom of communications across it. As long as that was maintained life continued in the same way. It is in the countries bordering on the Mediterranean that one finds all the specific manifestations of the cultural and economic life of the epoch. There is no sign in the seventh century of the end of the community of civilisation established by the Roman Empire from the Pillars of Hercules to the Aegean Sea, from the coasts of Egypt and Africa to those of Italy, Gaul and Spain. Despite the barbarian irruptions, so long as that unity was maintained, trade flourished. Marseilles was the great port of Gaul and all the products of the east, papyrus, spices, textiles, wine and oil, flowed through it to the interior. Foreign merchants, for the most part Jews and Syrians, as we have seen, had their residence there, and their nationality is in itself an indication of the close relations between Marseilles and the East.[4]

[3] Pirenne, *E. S. H.*, p. 7.
[4] Cf. especially *M. et C.*, pp. 123–126; *Med. Cities*, p. 17.

It was not the Germanic invasion, then, which was the cause of the breakdown of the Roman civilisation of Christian Europe, but an entirely different phenomenon. It was the astonishingly rapid and entirely unforeseen advance of Islam. By transforming the Western Mediterranean into a Mohammedan lake, this advance finally and decisively put an end to the age-long unity of the Mediterranean and separated the East from the West. The Mediterranean after many centuries ceases to be the channel either of ideas or of trade. A new orientation takes place. Africa and Spain gravitate within the orbit of Baghdad. The west is bottled up and has to live on its own resources. For the first time the axis of civilised life runs north of the Mediterranean, and the centre of gravity shifts to the Germanic north.[5]

The period of transition is from 650–750 and the process is completed by the year 800 with the establishment of the new empire of Charlemagne.[6] Already from the middle of the seventh century, sailings from the Mohammedan ports of the Aegean to the ports still in Christian hands had become impossible. There was still, it is true, a route open from Byzantium to Greece, the Adriatic, and Sicily; but this too did not last long. With the Mohammedan attack upon Sicily in 650, the conquest of Spain by the Moors under al-Tarik in 711, and the insecurity reigning in Provence, the trade of the Western Mediterranean finally came to an end. An Arabic writer, Ibn Kaldoun, boasted that "the Christians cannot float a plank on the sea".[7]

The results to the commerce and the economy of Christian Europe were disastrous. Marseilles to all intents and purposes ceased to exist as a port. Its once crowded

[5] *M. et C.*, p. 166.
[6] Ibid., pp. 260–261.
[7] Ibid., p. 145. For Jewish shipowners, see Chapter X.

quaysides were deserted, and it was probably on this account that the Jews were attracted to the Carolingian capital of Aix-la-Chapelle.[8] Commerce, except for a certain lively intercourse with the North in furs, was reduced to a minimum. Markets disappeared and the feudal system with its "natural" and barter economy took its place. Each agricultural district supplied its own wants. What trade there was was done not so much at markets but anywhere by "negotiatores", i.e. "specialists, professionals", and it is of the utmost significance that just at this time, as has been pointed out in the previous chapter, these negotiatores are synonymous with the Jews. There was but one perilous route left open for any adventurous Christian traveller who wished to go from the North to Italy. He could cross the Alps, running the risk of massacre at the hands of the people of Fraxinetum,[9] and only after this hazardous journey had been made was there a possibility, also attended by grave risks, of proceeding via Venice to the Levant and Constantinople. The only other route, hardly more inviting, was via Flanders to Russia, and then down the Dnieper to Constantinople, or via the Volga to Baghdad.[10]

Pirenne gives some striking facts which show clearly the results of this blocking of the Mediterranean trade routes. In the first place, as has been pointed out in the previous chapter, the Syrians are completely eliminated from the trade of the west and disappear. So do their commodities, the most important of which are papyrus and spices. On April 29th, 716, Chilperic II gives a diploma to the Abbey of Corbie, confirming a similar document given by his predecessors Clotaire III (657–673) and Childeric II

[8] Ibid., p. 232.
[9] Ibid., p. 227.
[10] *Travel and Travellers in the Middle Ages*, p. 125.

(673–675). The document authorises the delivery to the Abbey of the following merchandise, from bond at Fos[11]:

10,000 lbs. of oil	100 lbs. almonds
30 muids of garum	30 „ pistaches
30 lbs. pepper	100 „ olives
150 „ cumin	50 „ hidrio
2 „ girofle	150 „ "pois chiches"
1 „ cannelle	20 „ rice
2 „ nard	10 „ auro pimento
30 „ costum	10 „ seoda skins
50 „ dates	10 „ cordova skins
100 „ figs	50 packets of papyrus

After this date not a single one of the imported articles in this list, all of which came from the East, is mentioned in the capitularies. Such articles in it as were of local provenance, garance, cumin and almonds, do occur, but pepper, girofle, nard, cannelle, etc., disappear. There is not a mention of a single spice, and this article of diet also disappears from the menu of the people by the end of the seventh century.[12]

Pirenne raises the interesting question why the Moslems of Africa and Spain did not take the place of the Levantines. He gives the answer that in the first place, as is well established, Islamic merchants did not venture outside the territory of Islam in pursuit of their trade, and what trade was done was effected among themselves, secondly that there was a state of almost perpetual warfare between the Moslems and the Christians, and thirdly that their main "business" was pillage and piracy, not commerce. Some of these reasons may be open to question, or at least modification. It will be shown, for instance, that Arab merchants

[11] *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, pp. 71–72.
[12] Ibid., pp. 150–151. See the whole passage for other examples.

certainly did trade in China, but the fact remains that not a single Arab is mentioned in Gaul or Italy during the whole of this period.[13]

What of the Jews? That such international trade as did exist under these circumstances was monopolised by the Jews is beyond question. In general the Jews of the time occupied themselves much more with foreign than with internal trade.[14]

In describing the position, Pirenne first draws attention to the unique place which merchants as a whole held in the medieval economy. "In the midst of a social organisation where the populace was attached to the land, and where everyone was dependent upon a liege lord, they (the merchants) presented the strange picture of circulating everywhere without being claimed by anyone."[15] He then points out[16] the almost complete absence of merchants other than Jews during the Carolingian period. "Thus we seek in vain," he writes in another passage,[16] "for professional merchants. None existed, or rather none but the Jews, who alone, from the beginning of the Carolingian era, carried on a regular commerce, so much so that the words *Judaeus* and *Mercator* appear almost synonymous. A certain number of them were settled in the south, but the majority came from the Moslem countries of the Mediterranean, and reached Western and Northern Europe through Spain. They were the Radanites, perpetual travellers who still kept up a superficial contact with Oriental countries.[17]

[13] Ibid., p. 153.
[14] Pirenne, *E.S.H.*, p. 82.
[15] *Med. Cities*, p. 131.
[16] *E.S.H.*, pp. 11–12.
[17] As will be shown, this is a woeful understatement. Only one of the four routes of the Radanites was through Spain, and the contact was more than "superficial".

"The commerce in which they engaged was, moreover, exclusively that of spices and precious stuffs which they laboriously transported from Egypt, Syria and Byzantium to the Carolingian Empire. Through them the Church would procure the incense indispensable to the celebration of the divine offices, and, at long intervals, those rich fabrics of which cathedral treasuries have preserved occasional specimens down to our own days. They imported pepper, a condiment which had become so rare and dear that it was sometimes used instead of money, and enamels and ivory of Oriental manufacture which formed the luxuries of the aristocracy. Thus the Jewish merchants addressed themselves to a limited clientele. The profits which they realised must have been substantial, but when full allowance is made for this, their economic role cannot be considered as anything but that of accessories. Society lost nothing essential by their disappearance."

This statement illustrates the constant tendency on the part of Pirenne, especially in his earlier works, to depreciate unduly the value of this international trade of the Jews. It would appear that when he wrote his *Medieval Cities* in 1925, the existence of the Radanites had not yet been brought to his notice, and he dismisses the trade of the Jews as that of "pedlers (*sic*), the Jews, the infrequent merchants who passed through the markets at great intervals".[18] Similar in spirit is the statement that "the sporadic trade which Jews, pedlars and occasional merchants still carried on during the Carolingian era was too feeble and too effectively discouraged by the invasions of the Normans and Saracens",[19] or that "It was probably from Spain, or perhaps also Venice that these Jews obtained the spices and

[18] Page 162.
[19] Page 110.

valuable textiles in which they dealt . . . their commercial importance steadily declined in the course of the 9th century. . . . Commerce was reduced . . . it consisted only . . . in the barter, through the intermediary of the Jews, of a small number of products from the East".[20]

In his *Mahomet et Charlemagne* he speaks more favourably of the Radanites. "Under these conditions (the Blocking of the Trade Routes) there remained, for the maintenance of commerce, only the Jews. They are numerous everywhere. The Arabs did not expel them nor massacre them, nor did the Christians change their attitude towards them.[21] They therefore constitute the sole class whose subsistence depended upon commerce. And at the same time, by the contact which they preserved with one another, they were the sole economic link between Islam and Christianity, or, if one wishes it, between the East and the West."[22]

He omits, however, even with Ibn Khordadbeh's document before him, to make the slightest reference to the outstanding characteristic of the Radanites, their free passage through the world as far as China, and as a result he fails to note the essential point without which the activities of the Radanites in particular, and Jewish trade in general, cannot be fully appreciated. This is that the blocking of the trade routes of the world to all other merchants than Jews[23] provided for them a unique opportunity of which they took full advantage. This important fact is fully realised by Baron,[24] who points out that the rigid separation of East and West gave a new stimulus to Jewish commerce. The cultural and economic demands of

[20] Page 34.
[21] As has been shown in the previous chapter, they did—for the better.
[22] Page 153.
[23] This will be proved in Chapter IX.
[24] *Social and Religious History of the Jews* I, pp. 321–322.

the West were growing, while Eastern countries had a shortage of labour and of women for the harems. White slaves were in the highest demand, and a class linking the two regions was bound to arise.

Full credit is given by Heyd[25] to the "great Jewish merchants whose role as intermediaries between East and West was then so considerable".[26] Dispersed among the peoples of the Orient and the Occident, while other nations warred, they could, without arousing suspicion, come and go without undue risk. German tribal kings bought from them, and, in the new Frankish kingdom, Church dignitaries. "They lived almost entirely from commerce and were concentrated almost exclusively in commercial towns".[27]

In fact, from what has been said, there is already strong presumptive and actual evidence that in the 8th and 9th centuries the Jews alone kept open the otherwise blocked channels of international trade, and this was their main source of livelihood. They were practically the sole trade links between Western Europe and Asia, and it was not until the 10th century that they lost their monopoly to the young Italian trading towns of Bari and Venice.[28]

The situation is well described in the following passage: "The cause for the sudden commercial activity and predilection for trading in Carolingian Gaul is probably to be found in the rise of Islam and its control of the land whence came most of the luxuries demanded in Europe. Christians could not trade in Mohammedan countries, nor could Moslems in Christian countries. Consequently an opening was

[25] *Histoire du Commerce du Levant*, 2nd ed.
[26] I, p. 77.
[27] I, p. 125. Cf. also P. Boissonade, *Le Travail dans l'Europe Chrétienne au Moyen age*; Paris, 1930; p. 136.
[28] Shipper, *Economic History of Jews in Poland*, III, p. 29. See Chapter XX.

left for the Jews who were tolerated in both spheres as commercial intermediaries. Within two centuries after the foundation of Islam, the Jews were extremely active in the trade between Europe and Asia, and from Spain to China there existed a series of Jewish communities where the Jews of every country could find the most exact information about the various places of trade, the routes, the opportunities. With these advantages the Jews of Western Europe could themselves undertake the furthest voyages."[29]

The one important and decisive fact which has still to be discussed and proved is whether the Jews could in fact move freely between Christian and Mohammedan, and, for that matter, Mohammedan and Chinese countries. It is upon this possibility, which is not universally accepted, that the whole theory of the Routes of the Radanites depends. Before turning to a consideration of this vital question, however, one must discuss the general and Jewish conditions in other parts of the world, the Mohammedan world from Spain to the borders of Persia, the Khazarian Kingdom, China and India. It is only then that the possibility of freedom of movement for the Jews can be seen in its true perspective.

[29] S. Katz, *Jews in Visigothic Spain and French Gaul*, pp. 133 and 135.

CHAPTER III

THE JEWS UNDER ISLAM IN THE 8TH AND 9TH CENTURIES

"THE rise of Mohammed is one of the most stupendous events in history. He appeared at a time when both the Byzantine and Persian Empires were exhausted by a long series of desperate campaigns which seriously weakened Byzantium and created a state of anarchy in Persia. Mohammed founded the greatest empire the world had seen, stretching from the borders of China on the east, to Morocco, washed by the Atlantic, on the west, a distance of some 7,000 miles."[1]

It was in one and the same year, 711, that the two extremities of this vast empire were acquired, al-Tarik conquering Spain in the West and Mohammed ibn Kasim obtaining a foothold on the Indian continent by his capture of the Province of Sind,[2] which is so prominent in the account of the Routes of the Radanites.[3]

It was in the Mohammedan Empire that the overwhelming majority of Jews then living in the world were to be found. Where in Christian Europe they could be counted in their tens, in the Islamic world they could be counted in their thousands. The distribution of the Jews east of Babylon will be discussed in a separate chapter;[4] we confine ourselves in this to the Jews of Babylon and the countries west of it.

The Jews had come to live in Babylon at the very latest

[1] Sykes, *History of Exploration*, p. 45.
[2] *Enc. Brit.*, 13th ed., Vol. 25, pp. 142–143.
[3] See Introduction.
[4] See Chapter IV.

in the year 586 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar carried off in exile the people of Judea into his own country. They remained there in large numbers for many centuries after. A turning point in their history, which was fraught also with decisive consequences for the whole future of Judaism, occurred about the year 200 C.E., when the increasing persecution of the Jews in Palestine, and the establishment of the twin colleges of Sura and Nehardea,[5] combined to make of Babylon the spiritual centre of world Jewry, a supremacy which it held almost undisputed for the next 800 years. The pre-Islamic dynasty which ruled there was the Sassanide, which had been founded by Ardeshir I in 226, and was destroyed by the Arabs in 637. In the disorders which took place during the last decades of the Sassanide dynasty the Jews suffered various persecutions, from which they were finally delivered by the advent of the conquering Arabs. With the Mohammedan conquest the Jews entered upon a new era of prosperity. Jews and Nestorian Christians formed the bulk of the population between the Euphrates and Tigris. They had both been persecuted under the last Persian kings, and they rendered valuable assistance to the Mohammedans by whom their services were recognised and rewarded.

It is difficult to estimate the number of Jews in Babylon, but it is probable that among the 500,000 Babylonians who, as non-Moslems, are stated to have been subject to the poll-tax instituted by Omar I, a large minority, if not an actual majority, were Jews.[6]

[5] Sura remained one of the colleges until the end of the Geonic period. Its sister college moved from Nehardea to Mata Mahasya, and thence, about 350, to Pumbedita. Most of the facts appertaining to the position of the Jews after the Mohammedan conquest of Babylon, Palestine and Spain will be found in Graetz, Vol. V, Chap. 5. Individual references are not given, in order to avoid overloading the notes.

[6] Baron, *S.R.H.* I, 313.

Like the Jews of Babylon, those of Egypt had a history of continuous residence there for nearly a thousand years before the Mohammedan conquest, certainly from the founding of Alexandria by Alexander the Great in the fourth pre-Christian century. Unfortunately the history of the Jews in Egypt from the Arab conquest of 639–641 until Jauhar's entry into Fostat at the head of the Fatimid army in the 10th century is almost entirely shrouded in obscurity.[7] An indication of their numbers is provided by the fact that when in 641 Alexandria surrendered to Amr ibn al-Asi, and a stipulation was made that the Jews should be allowed to remain, 40,000 are reported to have remained, while 70,000 fled.[8] In 750 the head of the Cairo Jewish community was Abu-Ali Hasan of Baghdad,[9] an indication of the influence which Babylonian Jewry was already exerting on the Jews of the Mohammedan world, and in the reign of Ahmad ibn Tulun (868–84) a Coptic Church was sold to the Jews of Cairo.[10] From the available evidence, scanty though it is, taken in conjunction with the known prosperity of the Jews in the later Fatimid period, we are justified in asserting that, as a result of the Mohammedan conquest, "in Egypt, too, Jewry regained its former glory. . . . The Jewish people once more grew so populous and affluent that for centuries to come Egypt as well as the neighbouring Kairouan became centres of science and Jewish learning."[11]

For the Jews of Palestine no less than those of Babylon and Spain, the Mohammedan conquest brought a blessed relief from persecution and suffering, and ushered in a new era of activity. "In Palestine, Jewry oppressed and

[7] J. Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fatimides*, 1920, p. 13.
[8] Lane-Poole, *History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed., 1914, p. 11.
[9] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) XVII, pp. 426–430.
[10] Mann, p. 14.
[11] Baron, *S.R.H.* I, 313.

decimated by the last Byzantine ruler, recuperated in a short time to such an extent that it could attempt to wrest the hegemony over the Jewish world from the Babylonian Geonim."[12] On the other hand, Babylonian influence spread throughout Palestine, and side by side with the Palestinian synagogues there were synagogues of Babylonian Jews.[13]

The extension of the rule of the Caliphate across North Africa was the direct cause of the founding of Kairouan. Established in the year 670 by Ukba ibn Nafi, the conqueror of the Maghrab, this city grew in size and importance in the following century as a vital stage in the caravan route across North Africa. It is a stage in the third Radanite route, and its importance will be fully discussed when that route is examined. Jews were among its earliest settlers; in fact Arab sources relate that the Ommayad Caliph Abdal-Malik ibn Marwan (684–705) requested his brother Abdal-Aziz, Governor of Egypt, to send one thousand Jewish families to settle there.[14] In 800 it received a further large increase in its Jewish population, and it was here in 880 that the famous adventurer Eldad ha-Dani related to the Jewish community his remarkable tale of adventure.[15]

The last country we have to discuss is Spain. Savagely persecuted under the last Visigothic kings, Jews here, together with those of North Africa, made common cause with the advancing Moors. As early as 693 the Jews of Spain asked aid from their brethren in Africa and made plans to deliver the country to the Moors.[16] There is a copious literature on the part played by the Jews in the

[12] Ibid.
[13] S. Assaf, "Palestine in the Responsa of the Babylonian Geonim", in *Ziyyon* (Hebrew) I, pp. 21–30.
[14] *J.E.*, V, 61.
[15] Cf. Halper, *Med. Hebrew Texts*, I, 25.
[16] Katz, p. 21.

conquest of Spain.[17] They enthusiastically supported al-Tarik, who in his victorious advance across the country after his decisive defeat of the last Visigothic king, Roderic, entrusted the government of the newly-captured cities which he left behind him to the Jews. In Toledo the Jews threw open the gates of the city to him. As a reward for these services they were esteemed and treated as allies. In this way there began for the Jews of Spain a period of unexampled prosperity and influence which was to develop into what is known in Jewish history as the Golden Age of Spain.

From this cursory survey it will be seen that throughout the whole of the huge Mohammedan Empire in Spain, North Africa, Egypt, Palestine and Babylon,[18] there were large and flourishing Jewish communities which enjoyed great prosperity and unrestricted freedom. One result of this was that the natural increase alone was sufficient, under these favourable conditions, to create large Jewish settlements from India to Narbonne.[19] Further, the unification of the empire under one rule, and the extension and the new facilities of communication had two important consequences for the Jews. First, a complete change comes over their economic occupations. Under the Ommayads, that is, until 750, the Jews of Babylon were predominantly farmers, shepherds and millers. Under the Abbasides (750–1040) there was a general tendency to forsake agriculture for trade.[20] The change is reflected in

[17] Ibid., p. 116.
[18] Persia will be discussed in the next chapter. Arabia is not included since the Radanites did not traverse it except for their touching at El-Jar and Jeddah in Route I. The Jews had been officially expelled from Arabia by Omar I, but in the account of that route reasons will be given for the belief that the expulsion was not complete.
[19] Baron, *S.R.H.* I, 315.
[20] Shipper, Hebrew ed., p. 44; cf. Graetz, Heb., III, 198.

a number of adjustments of Jewish law at the time,[21] the most striking of which may be mentioned here. In 787[22] the two heads of the academies, the Geonim R. Bibi and R. Haninai, annulled the Talmudic law which had been enacted to protect the interests of orphans by forbidding a lien on their movable goods for the payment of debts or a wife's marriage settlement. The promulgation of the new law was attended by every mark of importance and urgency. Not only was it signed by both Geonim and the Exilarch, the political head of Babylonian Jewry, but it was circulated to the communities with the drastic instruction that "the judge who refuses to decide in accordance with this ruling shall be removed from office."[23] There can be but one reason for this law. In a community predominantly agricultural movables are of secondary importance and the prohibition of a lien on them would not hamper economic activity but protect the orphan owners. In a trading community, however, where the whole of a man's wealth consists of movables, such a prohibition would cause a stranglehold on economic activity.[24] It was for this reason that it was annulled. The new regulation presents a striking parallel to the *Prosbul* of Hillel,[25] like which it reflects changed economic circumstances.

The second result of the Mohammedan conquest was that the whole of the Jewish communities within the Empire came within the orbit of Jewish Babylon, which was the undisputed centre of Jewish life.

The contact between Babylon and Spain began soon after the Arab conquest of that country, with the mission

21 For examples see Baron, *S.R.H.* I, 326.
22 For the date see H. Tykocinski, *Die Gaonischen Verordnungen*, p. 41.
23 Cf. Graetz, loc. cit. *Letter of Sherira Gaon*, ed. Lewin, p. 105.
24 Cf. Graetz, in loc.
25 Mishnah, Shebiith X, 4; cf. *J.E.* X, 219.

of Natronai b. Habibai from Babylon to Spain in 772.[26] It is in this period that we find the beginning of that interesting genre of Jewish literature, the Responsa. From every part of the Mohammedan[27] world, questions on every aspect of Jewish life and practice, liturgy, history, law, business, were addressed in a continuous stream to the heads of the two academies. The answers to those "Quaestiones" constitute the "Responsa" which take the place of Case-Law in Jewish jurisprudence.

The most famous of these Responsa, those which produced the first Order of Prayers sent by Natronai Gaon (*c.* 850) to the community of Lucena in Spain,[28] the first Prayer Book of his successor Amram (846–864) sent to Barcelona,[29] the Responsum of R. Zemach Gaon sent to Kairouan concerning Eldad ha-Dani[30] in 880, and the famous historical document known as the letter of Sherira Gaon (*c.* 900 – *c.* 1000), addressed also to Kairouan,[31] which gives us the first history of the Gaonate, are of high historical importance. These are, however, but the merest fraction of the hundreds and thousands of Responsa from Babylon to all parts of the far-flung Mohammedan Empire and beyond.[32] Every part of that Empire is represented, and every decade from the unification of the Empire to the transfer of the centre of Judaism from Babylon to Europe in the 10th and 11th centuries.

The conclusions to be drawn from this "communication of ideas" and rapid dissemination of rabbinical literature

26 *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) VII, 477–489.
27 As from Christian Europe as well. But this will be discussed separately. See Chapter IX. Saadya sent his counterblast to Ben Meir "to most of the great cities", Malter, p. 83.
28 Cf. Ginzberg, *Geonica* I, 123; *Geniza Studies*, p. 119 ff.
29 Ibid., pp. 123 ff.
30 See *supra*.
31 Cf. *J.E.*, XI, 284.
32 Cf. Introduction.

are obvious. Postal services as such did not exist, and that these Questions and Responsa were sent by the hands of other than Jews is inconceivable. They presuppose, therefore, the existence of continual Jewish traffic between Babylon and every part of the Empire, and are cogent evidence of freedom of movement and ease of communication throughout its length and breadth.

Nor is this movement confined to the dissemination of "ideas". The whole history of the Gaonate is replete with instances of Jews travelling from one point of the Empire to the other. To give but a few examples culled almost at random. Rabbi Eleazar Alluf who came to Babylon in 850 and gave the Geonim information about Spain was a native Spaniard.[33] In 1115 Abu-Imram, an Egyptian Jew, gave a power of attorney to a man surnamed "the candlestick-maker" to do his business in Sicily and Morocco, and for his houses in Sicily and Spain.[34] Saadya Gaon, after his departure from his native Egypt, sojourned for many years in various parts of Palestine, Syria and Babylon prior to his installation as Gaon,[35] and we have a detailed account of his journey in the winter of 920–1, from Babylon to Aleppo via Baghdad and Arbela to Mosul, where he met a "caravan of Arabs."[36] The Spanish statesmen Chasdai ibn Shaprut and Samuel ibn Nagrela were in constant correspondence with Babylon, and it is specifically stated that the latter sent his questions via Kairouan.[37] Dunash ibn Labrat the disciple of Saadya travelled from Babylon to Kairouan, Fez and thence to Cordova.[38] Eldad ha-Dani,

[33] Harkavy, *Responsen der Geonim*, No. 261; Ginzberg, *Geonica* I, p. 2, note; Malter, *Saadyana*, 76.
[34] *J.Q.R.* XVI, 280; cf. Baron, *S.R.H.* I, 323.
[35] Malter, *Life and Works of Saadya Gaon*; Philadelphia, 1921; p. 55.
[36] Ibid., p. 60, note 107. *Saadyana*, p. 135, 1, 2.
[37] Ginzberg, *Geonica* I, p. 36; cf. also pp. 30, 33.
[38] Graetz.

after reaching Kairouan, proceeded to Spain,[39] and so on. A letter from Spain to Babylon took more than a year to arrive.[40]

The greater ease of communications through the world of Islam is reflected in the fact that three of the four Radanite routes traverse its territory. The only reason that the fourth took another direction was that it was on this route that they obtained the slaves who were an important article of their commerce.[41] It is of more than passing interest too that, as will be shown, the second route passed through, or in the vicinity of, Sura and Pumbedita, the great Jewish centres.[42]

Thus from the coincidence that the political and cultural centre of the Caliphate was also the political and cultural centre of Jewry there resulted a unification of Jewish life. Travel and communications between the various parts of the Empire were easy and constant. There was nothing to prevent a trader proceeding by well-defined routes from the western extremity of the Empire, Spain, to Babylon, and, as will be shown in the next chapters, beyond to the frontiers of China and India.

[39] Cf. Elkan Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, p. 31.
[40] Mann, *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) VII, 486.
[41] See Chapters XV and XVIII.
[42] See Chapter XIV.

CHAPTER IV

THE "DRANG NACH OSTEN"

We have seen that the existence in the 9th century of large and flourishing Jewish communities in Spain, along the whole length of the North African littoral to Alexandria, in Palestine and in Babylon is a well established fact. The existence of such communities east of Baghdad, i.e. in Persia, especially Khorasan, the most easterly province of the Caliphate, Tibet, India and China is not so easy to establish. Here one is faced with a regrettable gap in Jewish historiography. There is not a country west of Babylon, and hardly a Jewish community, whose history has not been treated exhaustively in monographs and in works on general Jewish history. Babylon, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, North Africa, Arabia, Spain and Christian Europe —for all these countries the student has a host of authorities to which ready reference can be made. Jewish Babylon was, during the Mohammedan period until about the year 1000, the very centre of world Judaism. From that centre radii ran in all directions to points on the perimeter. The course of these radii to the western, northern and southern segments of that circle can be traced without the slightest difficulty. The Geonic Responsa alone give us ample evidence.

When, however, we turn to the eastern segment of the circle we seem to come up almost against a blank wall. It is a fact that what may be called the "Drang Nach Osten", the spread of Jewish communities eastward from Babylon,

has been almost entirely ignored by Jewish historians.[1] It is obvious that such a movement must have taken place, and that the Chinese and Indian Jewish communities, which will be treated in separate chapters, are, as Godbey points out in the case of the former, the extreme limits, the last link in a chain of such communities.[2] The present chapter, then, deals with the spread and existence of Jewish communities east of Baghdad to the borders of China and of India. It does not aim at being more than a prolegomenon to a fascinating chapter of Jewish history which is still to be written, and will confine itself mainly to such evidence as bears directly or indirectly on the Routes of the Radanites.

Ignoring the Ten Tribes of Israel which were exiled about 721 B.C. to "Halah and Habor by the River Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes,"[3] although Halah, Habor and the River Gozan are almost certainly in Khorasan,[4] we find that the first known settlement of Jews in Babylon took place after the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. The unknown prophet who is the author of II Isaiah describes the impending return after the Proclamation of Cyrus in the following words: "And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them into the Nations, to Tarshish, Pul and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame. . . . And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering . . . to my holy mount

[1] W. J. Fischel, who has published some valuable monographs on Persia, announces the forthcoming publication of a "History of the Jews of Persia", *Historia Judaica*, Vol. VII, 1945, p. 30, note 3. India has been briefly treated by N. Schlousch, "Les Juifs et le Judaisme aux Indes", in *Revue du Monde Musulman*, IV, 728–769. White's *Chinese Jews* is almost entirely confined to the late community of Kai-feng-fu.

[2] Godbey, *The Lost Tribes a Myth*, p. 368.

[3] II Kings, XVIII, 11.

[4] Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v.

Jerusalem."[5] The exact identity of these places need not concern us; what is of moment is that this passage implies a wide dispersion of the Jews in the Babylonian Empire during the period of the exile. As a modern commentator puts it, "There is nothing strange in the fact that the Jews were so dispersed for they were in Babylon, and the Babylonian Empire stretched afar at that time. There was nothing to prevent the Jews, in pursuit of their trade, from spreading throughout the Empire."[6]

When the return did take place, it consisted only of 42,360 Jews,[7] to whom must be added the 1,800 who came up with Ezra[8] and probably a sprinkling of individual immigrants; but there can be no doubt that the overwhelming majority preferred to remain in Babylon under Persian rule.

There is no reason to doubt the correctness of the statement that Ahasuerus ruled "from India to Cush"[9] since his two predecessors Darius,[10] and to some extent Cambyses had already extended their kingdom as far as the countries round the Indies,[11] nor of the statement of Haman that the Jews were scattered and dispersed throughout all the provinces of the kingdom.[12] This would indeed be an entirely natural development of the freedom given to the Jews after the Persian conquest.

We find no further references to the Jews of the Persian Empire for the next six centuries, during which the whole history of the Jews in Babylonia is shrouded in a complete and impenetrable obscurity. We must, however, assume

[5] Isaiah, LXVI, 19 and 20.
[6] Krauss, *Scientific Commentary on Isaiah* (Hebrew, Warsaw), in loc.
[7] Ezra II, 64. This was the number of males.
[8] Ibid., Chapter VIII.
[9] Esther I, 1.
[10] Herodotus IV, 44.
[11] Cassel, *Commentary on Esther*; Edinburgh, 1888; p. 6.
[12] Esther III, 8.

that the Jews continued to be settled there in large numbers, for when the curtain is raised in the period of the Babylonian Talmud, 200–500, we see the Jews under the same circumstances resident in every part of the Empire as far as India.[13]

The Talmud mentions versions of the Scriptures in Assyrian, Elamite, Persian and Median,[14] i.e. the languages spoken over the whole vast area of Persia and Bactria, which undoubtedly proves the existence of large Jewish communities throughout these countries. The passage of the Talmud referred to finds a remarkable parallel in the New Testament where it is mentioned that the pilgrims to Jerusalem, "Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven," said "And how hear we every man in our own tongue *wherein we were born*, Parthians and Medes and Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia."[15]

There is every reason to suppose that the same conditions prevailed in the period of the Radanites. We should naturally expect the development of the trade routes under the Mohammedans to have fostered the already existing dissemination of the Jewish communities, and all the evidence at our disposal confirms this assumption. The Arab geographers never mention the existence or size of Jewish communities. That their presence is taken as a matter of course is shown by the fact that Mustawfi, in referring to Abarkuh (or Barkuh) makes explicit mention of the fact that the climate was such that no Jew could

[13] For India see next chapter. For the geographical distribution of the Jews in Babylon during the Talmudic period see Neubauer, *La Géographie du Talmud*; Paris, 1868. J. Obermeyer, *Die Landschaft Babylonien*. I. Z. J. Hirshinsohn, *Sheva Hochmot* (Hebrew), 2nd. ed.: London, 1912.
[14] Tractate Sabbath 115a; cf. Godbey, Chap. XVIII, and White, *Chinese Jews* I, 138.
[15] Acts II.

remain alive there for forty days, hence "among the population of Abarkuh there were no Jews."[16] It is obvious that it was the *absence* of Jews, and not their presence, which excited comment. In respect of practically every province of the Eastern Caliphate we have references to Jews and Jewish communities. Khuzistan, east of Iraq, is called in the Geonic literature by its ancient name of Elam,[17] and there are repeated references to the Jewish communities of Elam and their customs.[18] Hiyya, who was Gaon of Pumbedita after 689, hailed from Messene, near the Persian Gulf.[19] In Jibal, off the Khorasan road, was the town of Ispahan. This town, according to tradition, had been founded by the Jews, as its original name al-Yahudiyah implies. Not only so, but only two miles east of it was the town of Jay, one of whose gates was called the Yahudiyah gate.[20] Under the Persian king Perozes (457–484) half of the very large Jewish population was massacred for having put to death two Magi.[21] Ispahan was the home of Ishaq b. Yakub Obadiah Abu Isa al-Isfahani, who lived about 750,[22] the founder of the Jewish sect of Isawites or al-Ispahaniyah, the first Jewish sect of the Geonic period. He declared himself a prophet, and, according to a 12th century authority, with 10,000 Jewish warriors at his disposal, stood his ground against the Mohammedans for four years.[23] References to him are found in Arabic sources. Of Tustar (which in the 12th century had a Jewish population of 15,000[24]), the head-

[16] Le Strange, p. 285.
[17] Le Strange, p. 245.
[18] Cf. Harkavy, *Ha-Kedem* III, p. 89; Ginzberg, *Geonica* Vol. II, pp. 3 and 279; Ozar Ha-Geonim Vol. 2 (Sabbath) p. 26; Mann, *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) VII, 471.
[19] Mann, loc. cit., p. 464.
[20] Le Strange, p. 203.
[21] *J.E.* VI, 659.
[22] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) I, p. 96.
[23] Ibid.; cf. Pinsker, *Likkute Kadmoniyot*, pp. 1, 10, 16, 25 and 26.
[24] *Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, ed. Adler, p. 58.

quarters of the Persian carpet industry, it is expressly stated that the greatest dealers there were Jews. A Jew controlled the whole pearl fishery of the Persian Gulf; even far-away Kashmir, which was closed against all foreigners, made an exception in favour of Jewish traders.[25]

From Tabaristan north of Jibal came one of the earliest astrologers, the Jew, Sahl, about 800, a scholar in physics, mathematics and astronomy. Sahl was called Rabban al-Tabari, i.e. the Rabbi of Tabaristan,[26] the capital of which, of the same name, had in the 12th century 4,000 Jews.[27] Evidence could be cited of numerous other places east of Baghdad, such as Nahawend whence came the noted Karaite author, Benjamin b. Moses Nahawendi in the 9th century,[28] Maimuneh, 200 miles south-west of Balkh, the original name of which was Al-Yahudiya, or al-Yahudan-al-Kubra (the Great Jewry),[29] but there is no need to pursue these stray references further.

Most important for our purpose is, however, the famous Khorasan Road, the main highway from Baghdad to the East, and especially its terminus, the province of Khorasan. Khorasan was already on the borders of China, and if the existence of Jewish communities can be established on the main points of that famous road, and in the province of Khorasan, the possibility of an easy line of communication for Jewish traders is established at the same time.

The main stations on the Khorasan road eastward from Baghdad were as follows: (1) *Kermanshah*. I have found no reference to a Jewish community there. (2) *Hamadan*. This town is generally identified with Ecbatana. Jews

[25] For all these see A. Mez, *Islamic Culture* VII, 317, quoted by Baron, *S.R.H.* I, 323.
[26] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) XIII, p. 108.
[27] *Benjamin of Tudela*, p. 58.
[28] *J.E.* II, 32. Pinsker *L.K.* 44, 72, 109.
[29] Le Strange, p. 424.
[30] Ibid., Chapter I.

settled there shortly after its foundation, and prospered there. Persecutions took place during the period of the Arab conquest.[31] Hamadan is the traditional site of the tombs of Mordecai and Esther. The still extant alleged tomb of Mordecai was erected in the year 557, that of Esther by "the pious and righteous woman Gemal Setan" in 841. The building in which they are housed was erected in 713.[32] From Hamadan came Yudghan, a disciple of Abu-Isa of Ispahan, who founded the sect of Yudghanites in the 8th century.[33] All these facts point to the existence of a large Jewish community in Hamadan during the time of the Radanites. In the 12th century Benjamin of Tudela reports the existence of a community there of 30,000 or, according to one manuscript, 50,000 Jews.[34]

(3) *Ray*, the ancient Rhages of the Book of Tobit, is of especial interest in view of the suggestion that the name Radanites is derived from it.[35] The existence of a Jewish community there is strongly suggested by one of the incidents in the revolt of Abu-Isa al-Isfahani. When he was being hard pressed round Ispahan, he retired towards the North, to Ray, claiming that he was going to summon to his aid the "children of Moses" who dwelt there,[36] and it was there that he was defeated.[37]

(4) *Nishapur*. Benjamin of Tudela has a fascinating reference, in the 12th century, to the existence of independent Jewish tribes in the mountains round Nishapur.[38] This passage is so closely paralleled by the account of the 9th century adventurer, Eldad-Ha-Dani[39] as to suggest that

[31] *J.E.* VI, 188. [32] *E.B.* XIII, 868.
[33] *J.E.* XII, 624–625. Pinsker *L.K.* 1, 10.
[34] *Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, p. 53. Hebrew text and note.
[35] See Chapter XII.
[36] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) I, 96.
[37] *J.E.* VI, 625.
[38] *Itinerary*, p. 59 ff.
[39] See Halper, *Post-Biblical Hebrew Texts*, Vol. I, p. 26.

Eldad, whose veracity has been unjustly maligned, hailed from there.[40]

Other places on the route were Tus, Merv, Bokhara and Samarkand, the last three of which, like Nishapur, are in Khorasan. The subject of the Jews of Khorasan in Medieval Hebrew and Islamic literature has recently been dealt with by W. J. Fischel,[41] who has collected a mass of evidence proving conclusively the existence of Jewish communities in Khorasan generally during the period of the Radanites and slightly later, and especially in the main cities of Merv, Balkh,[42] Ghazna, Herat and Nishapur, as well as in Bokhara and Samarkand. So ancient was this Jewish community that in the 10th century the famous Gaon of Sura, Saadya al-Fayumi (892–942), ascribes to its members descent from the Ten Lost Tribes,[43] and the 11th century writer who quotes this statement adds that a man told him that in his day there were no less than 40,000 Jews there who paid tribute.[44]

Khorasan is the gateway to China, and it is therefore of more than passing interest that the same author, one of the first Jews to mention China,[45] explicitly speaks of "Khorasan and China" as adjacent to one another.[46] In fact, once the Jews were in Khorasan over the Oxus, there was no physical bar to their advance further east to India and China.[47]

[40] See my article "Eldad Ha-Dani and China", *J.Q.R.*, XXXVI (Jan. 1946, pp. 231–238).
[41] The Jews of Central Asia (Khorasan) in Medieval Hebrew and Islamic literature. *Historia Judaica*, Vol. VII, 1945, pp. 29–50. Unfortunately this brilliant and original piece of research is marred by a number of inaccuracies, to which I have drawn attention in an article in *Historia Judaica*.
[42] In Balkh, which is specifically mentioned as one of the stations on the fourth route of the Radanites, vide infra, Ch. XV.
[43] Quoted by Moses B. Ezra, V. Harkavy in *Ha-Melitz*, 1879; p. 81.
[44] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) I, 186. [45] See Chapter VI.
[46] Saadya on Ezekiel xxxviii, 2, quoted by Tanhum Yerushalmi, 13th cent. See Harkavy, *Notes to Graetz*, Heb. ed., Vol. V, p. 26.
[47] Abu-Said al-Sirafi tells of a native of Khorasan who came with his wares to Khanfu, carrying his goods on his back: *Enc. Islam*, I, 842.

The caravans from Persia to China followed two routes, a northern and a southern, to avoid the dreaded Taklamakan desert.[48] Striking evidence has been discovered in recent years of Jewish participation in the caravans on each of these routes, though not necessarily of the existence of communities. On the northern route Sir Aurel Stein, the famous explorer, discovered at Dundan-Uilik in Chinese Turkestan, a Persian business letter, written in Hebrew characters, which has been dated by Professor Margoliouth in 708.[49] On the southern route Professor Paul Pelliot found a sheet of ancient Hebrew writing at Tun-Hwang in Eastern Turkestan. It is a penitential prayer, consisting of passages from the Psalms and Prophets. It has been dated by Schwab as belonging to the 8th century,[50] and its interest is enormously enhanced by the fact that it is written on paper, at that period manufactured only in China.[51]

In respect of Tibet there is one clear reference to a Jewish community. Ibn Muhalhil, c. 941, states that "between Khotiyan (Khotan) and Khalib (Tibet) they came to Bahi (Bai, between Aksu and Kucha). In the city are Mohammedans, *Jews*, Christians, Magians and idolaters."[52]

An eastward trek of Jews to Tibet centuries before the Radanites is suggested by the following passage,[53] which, though of doubtful historical value, is too interesting to omit.

[48] See Map.
[49] Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, Vol. I, pp. 306–309; Vol. II, Plate CXIX.
[50] "Le Plus Ancien Manuscrit Hebreu" in *Journal Asiatique*, 1913; pp. 139 ff.
[51] White, *Chinese Jews* I, p. 9.
[52] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, p. 251, and notes.
[53] From a review of a book entitled *China's First Missionaries, Ancient Israelites*, by Rev. T. Torrance (Thyme, 3/6), in *The Times Literary Supplement*, July 1937.

"Nineteen years ago, in that happy hunting ground of naturalists which lies in the mountainous borderland between China proper and Tibet, Mr. Torrance's widespread work as a missionary brought him into contact with a people whose architecture and physiognomy bore unmistakable signs of Semitic origin. Known to the Chinese as the Chiang race, these people were strikingly different in their mode of life, manners and religious ceremonies from the aboriginal non-Chinese tribes of that region. As far back as 1860 Dr. Macgowan had discovered and published evidence that a numerous colony of Jews had existed at Cingfu about a century before the birth of Christ, and that, in all probability, some of them had made their way into the mountain regions between China and Burma.

"Mr. Torrance's work confirms this surmise and amplifies it by showing that the Chiang people are descendants of the tribes of Israel who inhabited Palestine centuries before the Christian era, and that thanks to the semi-independent state which they maintained until conquered by the Emperor Chi'in in the 18th century, they had preserved many of the racial customs and the religious rites laid down by the Mosaic law, including the sacrificial rite of atonement. A close study of these rites and customs has enabled Mr. Torrance to establish the identity of the Chiang people, and to trace their history. They are now greatly diminished in numbers, but the original Israelite settlers occupied, and their descendants dominated, a large portion of Western Szechuen long before the Chinese did. Mr. Torrance's conclusions are confirmed by illustrations to the text which show convincingly Jewish types."

That such a migration took place eight centuries before the Radanites is perhaps rendered more probable by the fact that a similar migration took place a millennium after them. It is interesting to note that such Jewish population

as exists to-day in Java, Sourabaya, Burma, India, China and Japan is overwhelmingly of Baghdadi origin of the last two centuries,[54] and their migration affords a perfect parallel to the " Drang Nach Osten " of previous centuries.

[54] *Journal of a Jewish Traveller*, I. Cohen, London; 1925.

CHAPTER V

JEWS IN INDIA

We have in the previous chapter demonstrated the existence of Jewish communities in the eastern provinces of the Eastern Caliphate, in Khorasan, especially the Transoxanian portion of it, and that part which is now Afghanistan.[1] Once they were settled here, there was nothing inherently impossible in their further spread to the Indian sub-continent.

Unlike China, which appears first to swim into the Jewish ken about the time of the Radanites,[2] India was known, at least to the Jews of the Persian Empire, in the fifth pre-Christian century. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the statement that the empire of Ahasuerus extended to India, or that Jews were to be found throughout that empire, although no actual evidence can be adduced that they had penetrated so far at that time.

Josephus, who lived in Palestine in the first century, was certainly aware of the existence of India, and in his interpretation of the tenth chapter of Genesis, he states that " Shem, the third son of Noah, had five sons who inhabited the land that began at the Euphrates and reached to the Indian Ocean ".[3] It is, however, in the Babylonian Talmud, compiled in Babylonia between 200–500 C.E., that we get the first clear mention of Jewish contacts with India, as distinct from a knowledge of the existence of the country.

[1] Balkh and Herat are in modern Afghanistan.
[2] See next chapter.
[3] Josephus, *Antiquities I*, VI, 4.

Not only do we find here explicit mention of Indian ginger,[4] linen[5] and iron,[6] but we are actually told of a certain R. Judah, an Indian convert to Judaism, who died in Babylonia.[7] There is, however, no indication whether his conversion took place in India or in Babylon.[8] Other possible references to India in the Talmud are to be found in the statement that "elephants are not common, while the ostrich is",[9] in the use of the word "Shaga", an Indian word for teak,[10] and in the remarkable fact that the Hindu version of the Story of Ahikar[11] betrays many points of resemblance with the Talmudic material which occur in no other version.[12]

India was regarded by the Rabbis of the Talmud as the end of the world.[13]

The most that can be said of these references is that they point to a knowledge of, and a contact with, India during this period, with the possibility of individual Jews living in India. There is still, however, no hint of Jewish communities. The first such hint comes towards the end of

[4] Bab. Talmud, Tractate Berachoth, 36b.
[5] *Mishnah Yoma III*, 7. The Mishnah is Palestinian and its date of redaction *circa* 200.
[6] Bab. Talmud, Tractate Abodah Zara 16a.
[7] Ibid., Kiddushin, 22b; Baba Bathra, 74b. But see Rabbinowicz, *Dikduke Sofrim ad loc.*, where he cites an alternative reading Amadia. According to Tosaphot Yebamoth, 102b, the passage of Kiddushin 22b should read "R. Judah the Indian who was converted to Judaism *together with his father*". This was almost certainly the original reading, and the reference to his father was omitted as it does not affect the point made in the Talmud.
[8] The passage in *Baba Bathra* beginning "Once we were travelling on board a ship when we saw a precious stone that was surrounded by a snake", is one of those typical travellers' tales which abound in ancient and medieval literature. Can one assume that the reference is to his journey from India to Babylon, in which case it would point to his having journeyed by the sea-route? The story includes the words "We had with us salted birds", which certainly suggests a long voyage.
[9] T.B. Sabbath, 128a.
[10] Ibid., 129a. See Jastrow, *S.V.*, and Löw, *Aramäische Pflanzennamen*; Leipzig, 1881; p. 64.
[11] See *The Story of Ahikar*; Cambridge, 1913.
[12] *J.E.* I, 290.
[13] T.B. Megilla, 11a.

the Talmudic period, if the assumption of Graetz[14] can be accepted, that the arrival of Joseph Rabban[15] (whose name strongly suggests a Babylonian origin) at the coast of Malabar took place in 490. As a result of persecutions in Babylonia, this Joseph led a migration of Jews to India, while others escaped to Arabia. The King of Cranganore received him hospitably and gave him a charter. When Cranganore was destroyed the Jews went to Matfachery, one hour's journey from Cochin, which later was called, significantly, "Jews' Town".

If Jews could settle in India before the Mohammedan penetration, they are likely to have done so to a much greater extent after it. Sind was invaded by sea from the mouth of the Indus by Mohammed ibn Kassim in 711,[16] and it remained under Arab rule for three centuries, being subject to the Eastern Caliphate. During the whole period of the activity of the Radanites, therefore, this important station on their long route was an integral part of the Eastern Caliphate, throughout the length and breadth of which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the Jews spread themselves. Even, therefore, if there were no direct evidence of the existence of Jewish communities in India during this period, it could confidently be assumed on this ground alone, since there was nothing to prevent the Jews from extending their residence to the confines of the Caliphate. Providing that the statement is confined to this period, there is nothing improbable in Baron's otherwise too sweeping generalisation that "India appears to have absorbed a steady influx of Jews",[17] although the few facts which he adduces are not sufficient to prove his point.

[14] Hebrew ed., II, 452.
[15] See later.
[16] *Enc. Brit.*, 13th ed., XXV, pp. 142–143.
[17] *S.R.H.* I, 314.

It is not, therefore, surprising that the first clear evidence of a Jewish *community* in India dates just from this period, the period of the Mohammedan rule and the activity of the Radanites. The assumption of Graetz that the arrival of Joseph Rabban took place in 490 has been challenged; an alternative theory is that the famous Sasanam (Charter) of the Jews of Cochin, granted by Cheramal Perumal, King of Malabar, to Joseph Rabban, can be dated between the narrow limits of 750 and 774. The assumption that it is not earlier than 750 is based on cogent palaeographic grounds; that it is not later than 774 on the fact that a Charter granted to the Nestorian Christians in that year is copied from it.[18] These dates would completely harmonise with the natural assumption that the Mohammedan conquest of India acted as a stimulus to the settlement of Jews in India, and that the facilities afforded by the Mohammedan rulers were taken advantage of by the Nestorian Christians also, as was the case in China.[19] From this point we have several references to Jews in India. Ibn Wahab mentions them in the 9th century,[20] Renaudot states that in the next century a multitude of Jews resided even in Ceylon, where they took part in the municipal government, and where they were granted the utmost religious liberty by the King[21]; and it was undoubtedly from these and similar colonies that, as the noted sinologist, Professor Chavannes, affirms, "Between 960 and 1126 (the Sung Dynasty) Jews coming from India brought for the first time, as a tribute to the Court of China, stuffs from the Western lands"[22]—a statement which provides us with the last link in the Radanite chain from Europe to China.

[19] See next chapter.

[18] *J.E.* IV, 135.
[20] *J.E.*, loc. cit.
[21] M. N. Adler, *Itinerary*, p. 65, note 1.
[22] *J.E.* IV, 33.

It is, however, from the two ancient Jewish communities still extant in India to-day, the white Jews of Cochin, and the Indian Jews called Beni Israel, that we obtain the most valuable evidence of the existence of Jewish communities there a thousand years ago. The Beni Israel have a tradition that they are the descendants of the survivors of a band of Jews who fled from persecution and were wrecked near the Henery and Kenery islands in the Indian Ocean, fifteen miles from Cheul, the chief emporium of trade between Arabia and India,[23] and therefore on the very route of the Radanites.[24] They also speak of a religious revival which took place among them nearly a thousand years ago, which would be a natural consequence of their contact with Jewish traders.

It is also during this period that we first hear of Jewish individuals hailing from India. Three at least can be specified. Hai Gaon[25] speaks of the "Indian writings called the Book of Kalilah wa-Dimnah".[26] According to Abraham ibn Ezra, whose references to India are so numerous and varied as to suggest that he actually visited that country during his extensive wanderings,[27] these famous fables of Bidpai were translated directly from Sanskrit into Arabic by the Jew, Joseph, who is also said to have brought the so-called Arabic numerals from India to Europe.[28] This translation was made in the 8th century.[29]

The same authority calls the oldest known Jewish astrologer, Mashallah of Egypt, who lived in the time of

[23] Ibid., III, 17.
[24] Route I.
[25] Gaon of Pumbedita, 983–1038.
[26] Ozar ha-Geonim, *Succah*, p. 31.
[27] See *Abraham ibn Ezra*, by David Cahana (Hebrew); Warsaw, 1922; Part II, pp. 75–77.
[28] Quoted by Steinschneider, *Z.D.M.G.* XXIV, 327, cf. *J.E.* VII, 417.
[29] See Lewin's note, Ozar ha-Geonim, loc. cit.

the Khalif al-Mansur, or al-Ma'amun (770–813), "a sage of India".[30]

Lastly, Jacob ibn Tarik, or Aben Scheara, as he is called in Hebrew, is said to have carried astronomical works from Ceylon to Baghdad about the year 820.[31]

References to India occupy a prominent place in the Responsa of the Geonim. Hai Gaon received questions from a Jewish community in India in his answer to which he refers to its "scholars, scribes and teachers", though he has a poor opinion of their attainments.[32] There is also a very doubtful reference to "children of Andalus which is at the end of the Western sea in the land of India",[33] where "India" seems to be an obvious mistake for Spain.

Saadya Gaon[34] in his Introduction to his Emunot ve-Deot refers to the fakirs of India "who have learnt to conquer fire," and makes the interesting statement that "the ignoramuses in this city think that whosoever goes to India becomes wealthy." Sherira, the father of Hai, in commenting on the word "Indochtera",[35] says: "we have heard from the old men that it is the flax from the land of Hind and the land of Hareni[36] in the distant provinces, which they cut and dye in various colours,"[37] while on another word "Sibni"[38] he remarks: "It appears that they

[30] Steinschneider, *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) XIII, 107.
[31] Sir Matthew Nathan, Presidential address to the Union of Jewish Literary Societies, 1913, quoted by E. Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, Introduction, p. XII. According to Steinschneider, however [*J.Q.R.* (O.S.) XIII, 108, note 1], Ibn Tarik, or Jacob ibn Schara, was the name of the Arabic translator of this work by a Jew. See Chapter XIX.
[32] Responsa 5 of *Geonic Responsa*, ed. Livorno, p. 2a. Harkavy, however (*Geonic Responsa*; Berlin, 1887; pp. XVIII–XXXI), gives reasons for regarding this passage as spurious.
[33] *Geonic Responsa;* Livorno, 1849; p. 20.
[34] Gaon of Sura, 891–942. His "Emunot ve-Deot" was written about 930.
[35] Talmud Bab., Gittin, 20a.
[36] "A passage quoted by Dulaurier in relation to camphor from an Arabic author Ishaq ben Amram says that the best camphor comes from Herenj which is Little China. This seems to point to Borneo or Cochin China". Yule, p. 244.
[37] Ozar ha-Geonim X (Gittin) I, p. 39.
[38] T. B. Gittin, 59a.

were thin garments which are put in shells of nuts which come from India where they grow."[39]

There is nothing inherently improbable in the suggestion that the present Jewish communities of Cochin and of the Beni Israel are the direct descendants of those Jewish settlers who came to India after the Mohammedan conquest of India, and that both these communities and the romantic community of Chinese Jews at Kai-Feng-fu,[40] which ceased to exist within living memory, are the relics of once flourishing communities which were in direct and close contact with their brethren in the West through the existence of the trade routes of which the Radanites availed themselves. The blocking of these routes about the 10th century[41] may well have placed them in a position of increasing isolation, so that the Chinese Jews were left "high and dry" until discovered by Christian missionaries in the 17th century. The Indian Jews, however, were not so isolated as their Chinese brethren since, with the Portuguese voyages of discovery in the 16th century, contact was re-established between the white Jews of Cochin and their brethren in the West, especially in Egypt.[42] The Beni Israel remained isolated until they also were discovered by Christian missionaries at the beginning of the 19th century.[43]

If this view can be accepted, references made in later centuries can also be adduced in favour of the earlier existence of the Indian and Chinese Jewish communities. In the 12th century Benjamin of Tudela (writing *c.* 1170)

[39] Ozar ha-Geonim X, II, 38.
[40] See White, *Chinese Jews*, and the next chapter.
[41] See Chapter XXI.
[42] Among the *Responsa* of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra (1479–1589) is one dated 1515, when he was Rabbi of Cairo, concerning the recently discovered community of White Jews in Cochin, India.
[43] *J.E.* III, 17.

mentioned the existence of several thousand Indian Jews, "all black",[44] and he also states that the authority of the Jewish Exilarch in Babylon in his time (1165–1173) extended, *inter alia*, to Samarkand, Tibet and India.[45] "It" (the authority of the Exilarch), he says, "further extends to the gates of Samarkand, the land of Tibet and the land of India. In respect of all these countries the Head of the Captivity *gives the communities power to appoint Rabbis and ministers who come unto him to be consecrated and to receive his authority.* They bring him offerings and gifts from the ends of the earth." Moreover, it is practically certain that Benjamin himself did not visit India, but obtained his information from hearsay, which would not have been possible without communication between India and Babylon. In fact, he explicitly refers to the Indian merchants coming to the island of Kish.[46]

We also find mention of David, the brother of Maimonides (1135–1204), who traded with India and lost his life in the Indian Ocean in 1168. Adler states that Graetz quotes the Arabic author, Alkifti, as his authority for the fact that he travelled as far as India itself,[47] but he appears to have misunderstood Graetz.[48]

Ibn Khordadbeh gives us no details of the places in India at which the Radanite traders called, in general mentioning only the countries and provinces. That they were coastal towns is obvious. In Sind the port of call was probably Daybul, then a fine harbour at the mouth of the Indus.[49] Further down the coast was Quilon, the most important port on the Malabar coast, where Benjamin of

[44] Adler, *Itinerary*, p. 59.
[45] Ibid., p. 41.
[46] Ibid., p. 62.
[47] E. Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, p. 101, note.
[48] H. Graetz, Heb., Vol. IV, p. 338, note.
[49] Le Strange, p. 331.

Tudela placed his several thousand black Jews. These black Jews either sprang from the intermarrying of the original white Jews with the native population, or else were the descendants of manumitted slaves, who, according to Jewish law, had to become Jews during their slavery. Either of these theories presupposes an original Jewish settlement some centuries earlier.

According to Benjamin[50] the journey from Quilon to Ibrig[51] took 23 days, and thence 40 days to the Sea of Nikpa, the Chinese coast, making a total of 63 days from India to China. The return journey to Zebid, the principal port of Yemen in Southern Arabia, took only 34 days.[52]

[50] Pages 65 and 66.
[51] For the identity of this place see Adler, *Itinerary*, p. 65, note 1.
[52] Cf. ibid., p. 67, note 1.

CHAPTER VI

JEWS IN CHINA

ALL four routes of the Radanites ended in China. What evidence then is there either of the existence of Jewish communities, or of Jewish traders in China during the 8th and 9th centuries?

As White states,[1] an intensive inquiry into Jewish relations with China throughout the centuries still awaits a pathfinder, and until that pathfinder is found the non-specialist must grope his way largely in the dark. One must not only find one's way, but at the same time clear away a great amount of weeds from one's path.

Godbey[2] points out that even while the Jews were resident in Palestine "there was never any physical impossibility of commercial relations between China and Palestine. The only question was, who controlled the trade?" Nor can one deny his general statement that at any time after 720 B.C., when the Israelite exiles were placed in the "cities of the Medes",[3] Israelite traders might have settled in Merv, Bokhara, Samarkand and Balkh-Bactria, i.e. on the great caravan routes to the East. But Godbey puts himself largely out of court by the inaccuracy of his statements. Thus, solely on the ground that Moffat translates an expression in Amos III, 12 as "silken cushions", he assumes an intercourse between North Palestine and China, whence alone silk came, in the 8th pre-Christian century. The Hebrew word used, however, is merely an

[1] *Chinese Jews*, p. 25. [2] *The Lost Tribes, a Myth*, Chapter XIII.
[3] II Kings XVIII, 11. See Chapter V.

adjectival form of the name Damascus! Nevertheless it is true, as he states, that "the question of Chinese Judaism involves the possibility of Judaism in each land between Palestine and China."[4]

Equally true is the converse, as stated by Adler, that, "Having regard to the fact that the trade route of ancient times from China and India was not exclusively maritime but crossed the steppes and highlands of Central Asia, and then passed through Media, Mesopotamia and Syria, it is not at all impossible that sections of the Ten Tribes of Israel may have found their way to China."[5] Nevertheless, the view persistently expressed by modern scholars that the "land of Sinim" mentioned in Isaiah XLIX, 12 refers to China, proves, on examination, to be without foundation, as the name refers to Syene in Upper Egypt.[6]

As far as one can infer from an *argumentum a silentio*, China was quite unknown to the Rabbis of the Talmud.[7] In fact there can be little doubt that, "At the dawn of Islam . . . almost nothing was known on this side of the Tunshan of the wonderful land from which came silks . . .

[4] Page 368.
[5] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) XIII, p. 23.
[6] Cf. e.g. "Critical and Experimental Commentary" on this verse. "The Arabians and other Asiatics called China Sin or Tshin. . . . This view of Sinim suits the context, which requires a people to be meant 'from far' and distinct from those 'from the North and West'" (Gesenius). The argument is impeccable, but it can equally be applied to the South, and this is exactly what Sinim is! In fact, as all the ancient commentators appreciated, Sinim is none other than the Syene of Upper Egypt mentioned in Ezekiel XXIX, 10, and XXX, 6. Thus the Midrash (Gen. Rab. LII, 4) regards it as a synonym for "South". So also the Targum Jonathan. Ibn Ezra translates it as "the border of Egypt". R. David Kimchi also explains it as the South, but not on the basis of the Midrash or the Targum but because "Sinim" in Gen. X, 17, were the descendants of Canaan. It is curious that none of the authorities who explain Sinim as China in Isaiah proffer this explanation on the same word in Genesis. Saadya Gaon, who, as will be shown, is probably the first Jewish authority to mention China, translates "the land of Sinim" as "Atra Balpavan". See David Kimchi in loc.
[7] The word "Darazin" in Talmud Bab., Tractate Sabbath 65a, is the Persian dar-i-cini (wood of China). See Levy, Wörterbuch S.V. This was realised by the Geonim (see later), but not by the Talmudic authorities.

for the goods were carried by the Chinese as far as the borders of their kingdom; there they were taken over by the people of the Tarim basin who were in the main Turks."[8] To the Arab geographers "China is the land of the unknown and the mysterious, into which only the boldest may venture."[9]

It is to be noted, however, that, although the opening up of intercourse between China and western Asia coincides with the expansion of the Mohammedan Empire, it is not the result of it. The cause is to be found in the *internal* developments in China which took place simultaneously with the consolidation of the Mohammedan Empire. Generally speaking, there is no evidence of Chinese trading outside their own country, and trade between China and the surrounding countries depended upon foreign merchants coming from abroad.[10] This intercourse naturally depended upon ease of communications from those countries, such as was found in the period of the T'ang dynasty (618–907). The only earlier period in which conditions similar to those of the T'ang dynasty are found is that of the Han dynasty (200 B.C.–220 C.E.), and

[8] *Enc. Islam* I, 839.

[9] Ibid., p. 140. These two statements refer to the Persian Empire and its successor, the Islamic of the Eastern Caliphate. In the Roman Empire there was from the beginning of the Christian era a strong demand for silk, whose only country of origin was China (Seres to the Romans), and there was a great trade between China and Rome until the 6th century, when the silkworm was transported to Europe. The silk was conveyed by the caravan routes of Western Asia, via N.W. China, to the northern rim of the Nanching range, through Kan Chou, Su Chou, An-Hsi Chou to Kashgar, and then either by the northern route via Samarkand or the southern route via Balkh, in both cases to avoid the Taklamakan desert. (See Chap. IV.) It was then taken to Seleucia, below Baghdad, and then to Antioch. In time the sea route by way of the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean was used; cf. White, *Chinese Jews*, p. 9, and for the sea route cf. Chapter XII. Schall (p. 151) plots three routes, a northern, a middle and a southern from the western end of the Great Wall to Kashgar; cf. in general pp. 149–157. There is, according to him, ample evidence in Chinese sources of trade between China and the Mediterranean during the Han Dynasty. (Early Han Dynasty 206 B.C. to 24 C.E., late 25 C.E. to 220 C.E.)

[10] Cf. White, *Chinese Jews*. I. p. 10.

it is precisely during this period that we get the first references to contact with the West. It was under that dynasty that trading with the West was extended by the development of communications, especially the establishment of public inns for wayfarers at every 10 li of the long road,[11] and it is during this period that one finds in Chinese writings an abundance of evidence of trade between China and the Mediterranean.[12] It is in this period too that, according to one tradition, the Chinese Jews of Kai-feng-fu date their arrival in the country.[13]

It is a noteworthy fact, and one that contributed greatly to making possible the remarkable journeys of the Radanites, that at the very time when the Mohammedan conquest brought all countries from Spain to the Chinese border under one unified rule, the T'ang dynasty extended the Chinese Empire from the Persian border to the sea. The various tribes which acted as a barrier against free intercourse between Persia and China were rapidly and completely subdued. The supremacy of the Uigur tribe was shattered about 830, the Tufans were driven out of Kansu and destroyed in 848, and, "as in Kan times, the people of T'ang contracted communications from China to Central Asia through the Turkic and Tufan countries."[14] The Tufans inhabited Tibet, Chinese Turkestan and North India,[15] in all of which regions we have found traces of Jewish settlement.[16]

To quote the account given by Sykes;[17] "A period of anarchy . . . was ended by the rise of a great warrior who

[11] T'sui-Chi. *Short History of China*, p. 87.

[12] See note 9.

[13] White, I, p. 31.

[14] T'sui-Chi, p. 146.

[15] Ibid., p. 145.

[16] See Chapter IV.

[17] *History of Exploration*, pp. 24–26.

ascended the throne in 626 as Emperor T'ai-T'sung and founded the T'ang dynasty. Under his virile leadership the Turks of Mongolia were crushed, Turkestan was conquered and the suzerainty of China was recognised throughout Central Asia and westwards as far as the Caspian Sea." It is at this point that the first great Chinese traveller, Houan T'sang, appears on the scene, and the route which he follows, in 629, is an anticipation of the latter part of the Radanite routes, Turfan, Kashgar, Tashkent, Samarkand and Derbend (the Iron Gates), across the Oxus to Balkh and then on to India. On the return journey he went by the southern route via Takharistan, the Pamirs, Kashgar, Tarkand, Khotan and China.[18]

"No state," says Sykes, "was more anxious to explore neighbouring countries and open up diplomatic and commercial relations with them."[19] During practically the whole of that dynasty, which completely covers the period of the Radanites, there was a unified, prosperous highly civilised Empire,[20] and Abu Zaid (916), like his predecessor, Suleyman (the first two Arab travellers in China whose work has come down to us),[21] dwells upon the orderly and upright administration of China during the T'ang dynasty.[22] As T'sui-Chi writes,[23] "The T'ang Empire at the height of its power was an even vaster one than the Han. . . ."[24] Westward, through the subjugation of Central Asian tribes, the boundary extended immeasurably further up to the edge of Persia. The T'ang Empire was, in fact, the focusing point for the whole of the Eastern world, in

[18] Ibid., p. 29.
[19] Ibid., p. 33.
[20] Latourelle, p. 227.
[21] *Relation des voyages faits par les Arabes*, Reinaud; Paris, 1845.
[22] Yule, p. 134.
[23] Page 138.
[24] Cf. Latourelle, loc. cit.

trade, commerce and especially in intellectual life . . . Chinese travellers reached India . . . Chinese ships sailed as far as the Persian Gulf, while the Caliph Haroun al-Raschid sent his envoys to the Emperor of China."[25]

As a natural result of this expansion of the Chinese Empire "foreign trade appears to have reached greater proportions under the T'ang than at any previous time. As in the earlier periods it was due chiefly to the initiative of aliens."[26] China succumbed to what might almost be called an invasion of the foreign religions of Persia, Nestorians, Zoroastrians, Manicheans, and later Mohammedans; and without question Jews also entered the country.[27] "The Nestorians were the first to arrive, making their way from Pekin in the 7th century . . . [under the T'angs] religious doctrines were brought from India, Persia and Arabia, and temples to the different deities were erected side by side in the T'ang capital of Ch'ang-an. All kinds of creeds, both 'native' and foreign were tolerated, and even patronised by the early T'ang rulers . . . the religion (Nestorian Christian) continued to stand in Imperial favour until in 845 the Emperor Wu banned and persecuted all 'foreign religions'."[28]

We thus obtain a picture of an active intercourse between Persia and China from the 8th to the end of the 9th century, in which Nestorian Christians, Moslems and Jews took part, and which reached its zenith in the later years of the 9th century, on the eve of the revolution of 878.[29] Taken in conjunction with the facts given in Chapter

[25] In 798 the famous Caliph, Haroun al-Raschid, sent three ambassadors to the Court of China. Yule, p. 92, from Remusat, *Mélanges Asiatiques*; cf. Sykes, *History of Persia* II, 2.
[26] Latourelle, p. 203.
[27] T'sui-Chi, p. 146.
[28] Ibid., p. 193. As will be shown, this can be extended at least to the year 878, the date of the sack of Quinsay.
[29] Beazley, *Dawn* I, 414.

IV on the spread of Jewish communities to the eastern confines of the Eastern Caliphate and beyond, it justifies us in accepting without reservation the statement of White: "Here and there in the large trading centres along the caravan routes there would be large and important groups of such traders, to such an extent as to make it advisable for them to maintain their synagogal worship under religious leaders. This is borne out by the fact that references to Jews are found to a limited extent in Chinese writings, and also those figurines used for tomb burial in the T'ang dynasty depict non-Chinese people both of classical and Semitic types. Furthermore, references to Jewish religious communities in certain cities in China proper, and particularly the data concerning Kai-feng-fu,[30] the capital of Honan, provide ample criteria pointing to the Israelites as probably being a very important medium in trading relations between China and the Roman Orient from early years." [31]

There is evidence that Jews took part in the early trade between China and the Roman Empire up to the 6th century. As might be expected, the first references to Jews in China are found during the T'ang dynasty, and they are particularly frequent during the 9th century when commerce with the West reached its zenith; and conversely the first Jewish references to China are in the Jewish literature of the East, i.e. Babylonia. To take the latter point first. The Mishnah[32] states that a woman may go out on Sabbath with "aught that she puts in her mouth." The Babylonian Talmud comments on this[33]: "for instance ginger or *darazin*", but it is only in the Geonic period that we find the correct explanation of this word[34] as "something which comes from China. It is a kind of spice which

[30] See below, note 51.
[31] *Chinese Jews* I, p. 10.
[32] Shabbat, VI, 5.
[33] Page 65a.
[34] See note 7.

is given to anyone who has inflammation of the bowels, and it is very astringent in taste, and dry." [35]

Both in Gen. X, 2[36] and in Ezekiel XXXVIII, 2[37] Saadya Gaon translates the word Tubal as China, and in the latter passage he connects it with Khorasan, the gateway to China, the two names Meshech and Tubal being translated "Khorasan and China".[38]

Another literary document of the 9th century which mentions China is the remarkable narrative of the adventurer, Eldad ha-Dani, who appeared in Kairouan in 880 with stories of independent Jewish tribes[39] and a ritual different from the accepted one.[39] He states that he was captured by fire-worshippers who took him to China, where he was bought and ransomed by a Jewish merchant who took him back with him.[40] Even if, as is generally assumed, Eldad was a romancer and an impostor, his knowledge of the existence of China is clear. I have, however, elsewhere given reasons for thinking that the veracity of his story has been unjustly impugned,[41] and if this is so, we have here a valuable reference to a Jewish trader in China in the 9th century.

The statement entirely accords with our knowledge of Jews in China during this period. It is in the 9th century that we hear of Jews in Canton.[42] Jews suffered in the sack of Quinsay in 878[43] and, according to Abu-Zaid Hassan al

[35] In other words, darazin is cinnamon, the last syllable being the same word "T'sin", China; cf. also Epstein, *Geonic Commentary to Tractate Ukzin*, pp. 144–145, "Spices which come from China".
[36] See *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) XIII, p. 352, note 2.
[37] Quoted by Tanchum Yerushalmi. See Harkavy notes to Vol. V of Hebrew ed. of Graetz, p. 26.
[38] Ibid.
[39] For a further discussion of this see Chapter XIX.
[40] See passage in Halper, *Post-Biblical Hebrew Texts*, Vol. I; Jewish Publication Society, 1921; p. 26, note 214; and *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) I; 102.
[41] See my article "Eldad Ha-Dani and China" in the *J.Q.R.*, Vol. XXXVI (Jan. 1946), pp. 231–238.
[42] Cf. Latourelle, pp. 204 and 210.
[43] Jacobs, p. 197.

Sirafi, in the revolt of Baichu, in the year 884, "120,000 Mohammedans, Jews, Christians and Parsees who had come there for commerce were massacred in Canfu, the chief port for all Arabian merchants."[44] And Suleyman, called by one authority "a Spanish Jewish traveller from Andalusia",[45] records that he found in all the large cities of China Jews who understood Hebrew and received him hospitably.[46]

Probably, however, the most valuable evidence of the existence of Jewish communities at this time in China is afforded by the facts known with regard to the romantic Chinese community of Kai-feng-fu, which ceased to exist within living memory.[47] Every indication appears to point to their original settlement as having taken place about this time. Thus the fact that these Jews dated their documents according to the Seleucid era shows that they must have entered the country before the 10th century, when the Jews all over the world changed the system of dating documents to the era of the Creation.[48]

Again, as Neubauer cogently points out, "there is no quotation in their books from the Gemara but parts of the Mishnah are found in their Prayer Book. Of course if they had emigrated to China in the 8th century they could scarcely have had the Gemara with them."[49] On the other hand, "the Persian which is found in their Prayer Books is not the old language, but that spoken now and since

[44] See *Géographie d'Aboulfeda*; Paris, 1848; I, p. LXXXIII; and *Ancient accounts of India and China by two Mohammedan travellers who went to these parts in the 9th century, translated from the Arabic by E. Renaudot*; London, 1733; p. 42. Cf. *J.E.*, art. China.

[45] But see Chapter XIX.

[46] A. Godbey, *The Lost Tribes, a Myth*; Duke University, Carolina, 1930; p. 397.

[47] White, *Chinese Jews*, is the most exhaustive treatment of this subject so far

[48] Finn, *Jews in China*, pp. 81–82. White, III, p. 108.

[49] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) VIII, 129.

Firdusi. If they had emigrated in the 3rd century[50] we ought to find a trace of the old Persian language"; and he comes to the conclusion, on purely linguistic and liturgical grounds, that the Jews probably settled in Khansu in the 9th century, and that a considerable number of them migrated to Kai-feng-fu in the 13th century.[51]

Local traditions are notoriously unreliable, and at best can only be cited in support of conclusions arrived at from other data. The Jews of Kai-feng-fu were discovered by Father Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit priest, in 1605, and the first member of that community whom he met, a young Jew named Ai, told him first that the Jews had been resident in the country for five or six hundred years,[52] and subsequently more precisely: "He said that they had a tradition that when King Tamerlane conquered all Persia he conquered China too, and there came with him many Moors (Mohammedans), Christians and Jews, about 800 years ago."[53]

The list of other towns in China where Jewish communities or Jews are mentioned in the succeeding centuries is impressive, and testifies to a wide distribution in earlier centuries. They are Hang Chou, Khan-baliq, Zaitun,[54] Ning-po,[55] Wei-yang, Ning-haia[56] and Nanking.[57]

That the Jews of China came from Persia is undoubted,

[50] As one of their traditions suggests. See *supra*.

[51] Loc. cit. They may well have moved to Kai-feng-fu earlier. Kai-feng-fu (Pien) was the capital of China during the Wu-Tai epoch of the Five Dynasties 907–960, in 907–923, 930–946 and 947–960, and during the whole Sung dynasty 960–1126, after which the capital was moved to Hang Chou. (T'sui-Chi, appendix.) It would have been natural for the capital to attract them. If the Synagogue in Kai-feng-fu was built in 1163 (White, I, 31), the date of settlement must have been earlier than that given by Neubauer.

[52] White, I, p. 31.

[53] Ibid., p. 36.

[54] Ibid., p. 31.

[55] Ibid., II, p. 27.

[56] Ibid., II, p. 49.

[57] Laufer, quoted by White, III, p. 11.

as there is a mass of corroborative evidence besides the facts already mentioned. There is first of all the liturgical evidence. As Neubauer says[58] "that the Chinese Jews came from Persia cannot be doubted, for all directions as to the recital of their prayers are given in Persian . . . the colophons at the end of the sections of the Pentateuch are also Persian." There is the evidence of their names. The remarkable codex of the names of the Chinese Jews published by White[59] has not been subjected to an analysis worthy of its importance, but even a cursory examination of it proves beyond question that many of the Hebrew names which occur there[60] are found only among Babylonian and Persian Jews.[61] Thirdly, there is their own persistent tradition that they came from the West.[62] And lastly, there is the evidence of a continuous contact throughout the succeeding centuries between these Jews and China. E. N. Adler bears striking testimony to this.[63] "From the Black Sea to Calcutta, from Baghdad to Kai-feng-fu, we meet with Persian Jews, that is to say Persian, in the sense that we in Europe are 'German'. They worship, or used to worship, in the Persian rite." "Many of them (the Jews of Bokhara) were great travellers. One man had been to China, several had visited India by way of Afghanistan and the Khyber Pass." "The Chinese Jews of Kai-feng-fu are probably from Bokhara, the Persian rubrics in their liturgies being in the Bokharan

[58] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) VIII, 127.
[59] Vol. III.
[60] The term "Hebrew" here is to be taken to mean the non-Chinese names.
[61] See my article "Eldad ha-Dani and China" in the *J.Q.R.* It is also pointed out there that the name השלוחי by which "Eldad the scribe and teacher" is called (see White, III, p. 105) is not a corruption of השלוח "the messenger", as is there suggested, but means "the man of Shilhi". For this town in Babylon, near Sura, whence came R. Joseph the Gaon of Pumbedita, and for the spelling, see Ginzberg, *Geonica* I, 40, and note 1, p. 41.
[62] Cf. White, pp. 54 and 65; *J.E.* IV, p. 35. Finn, pp. 42 and 61.
[63] E. N. Adler, *Jews in Many Lands*, pp. 173, 219 and 222–223.

dialect. The Bokhara Jews themselves have a tradition that their ancestors settled in various parts of Persia and especially at Salzawar, two days' journey from Meshed . . . and some of them emigrated thence to T'sheen Patsheen (China)" but soon ceased to have communication with their mother-country, though they "carried their genealogies with them."[64]

The Persian origin of these Jews can, therefore, be regarded as established, and the only question which remains to be discussed is the route by which they travelled. Two theories have been propounded on this point.

One is that they went by land via Khorasan and Chinese Turkestan. Some proof of this is afforded by the Jewish documents in Turkestan, mentioned in Chapter IV. It is an entirely natural route. "Merv commanded the great roads from Khiva to Herat and Bokhara to Meshed, and is thus at the crossways of the caravan routes to Persia, Afghanistan, India, China and Turkestan".[65] In view, too, of the fact that the Jews and the Nestorian Christians followed the same route, it is significant that Marco Polo, who incidentally refers to the powerful commercial and economic influence of the Jews of China in his time,[66] mentions the existence, in 1274, of Nestorian Churches all along the trade routes from Baghdad to Pekin.[67] Lastly there is their own tradition that they came from the West, though, as will be shown, this does not necessarily mean directly from Persia; as Finn states, "their own account of their arrival thither is merely that their forefathers came from the West, probably by way of Khorasan and Samar-

[64] This remarkable tradition, which accords so closely with the known facts, is the only mention I have found of any tradition among Persian Jews of the origin of the Jews of China. It is highly significant.
[65] *Jews in Many Lands*, pp. 213–214.
[66] Murray's translation, p. 99.
[67] T'sui-Chi, p. 184.

kand, the main route of ancient commerce in that direction."[68]

The other theory is that they came by sea from India. An Indian origin is attested by nearly all their documents. Thus their Inscription of 1489 states that "Our religion came out from India" (T'ien-Chu),[69] and so does that of 1512.[70] The gift of cotton goods to the Sung Emperor mentioned in the 1489 inscription also points to India, according to Laufer,[71] although it is by no means impossible that it came from western maritime countries.[72] Opinions differ, however, as to whether the India-China route was by sea or land. The most vigorous champion of this sea-route is Laufer, who goes so far as to deny the very existence of a land route via Asia. "The various stages of their migration," he writes, "can be traced with a fair degree of exactness. We meet them in the same ports of Southern China as the Arabs and Persians, at Zaitun, Ning-po, Hang Chou, Nanking, Yang Chou, finally advancing into the metropolis of the Northern Sung . . . they always entered China from India over the maritime routes at the southern ports, not, as was formerly believed, without reason, over the land route by way of Central Asia."[73] So also the Jewish Encyclopedia[74]: "The Jews came to China by sea, and not by crossing Central Asia." White[75] reasonably objects, "It has been stated that this reference to India points to a sea route for these immigrants coming from China, but this does not follow, though the sea route is not excluded," and

[68] *Jews in China*, p. 61.
[69] White, II, p. 11; cf. *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) XIII, p. 21.
[70] Ibid., p. 45.
[71] B. Laufer, *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature* XLVI, No. 3, 1930. Quoted by White, III, p. 9.
[72] Cf. *J.E.* IV, 33.
[73] White, III, p. 11.
[74] Loc. cit.
[75] Pages 20–21.

he points to the evidence which has been given above of the existence of land caravan routes.[76]

A little consideration will make it obvious that the two theories are not mutually exclusive. In point of fact two routes were used, one by land and one by sea. The Jewish merchants blazed no new trail but followed in the path of Arab traders from Persia. On this point Moule[77] cites a personal letter from Isaac Mason, a great authority on Chinese Mohammedanism. "As regards early immigration of Moslems, an article of mine recently published in the *Friends of Moslems* shows that they came both by sea and land. According to Moslem traditions the early envoys came overland. . . . I think the coast cities received more by sea . . . but the larger immigrations in later times came overland . . . from the peoples of Central Asia." To the same effect another authority, speaking of the penetration of Islam into China, says: "The two routes by which Islam came to China were quite different in character and object. The land route, which led into Northern China, brought Islam into the western parts of the northern kingdom only and did not send out colonies to the coast; the sea route ran along the coast of China as far as Kansu, founding colonies everywhere which carefully avoided any attempt to advance into the interior."[78] Thus the Islamic evidence completely bears out Ibn Khordadbeh's statement in his account of the routes that the Jewish traders travelled to China both by sea and by land.[79]

[76] Cf. also Rev: A. C. Moule in White, p. 21. The story of Ishaq of Oman (see Chapter XIX) suggests a *land route* also from India to China.
[77] White, III, p. 22.
[78] *Enc. of Islam* I, 843.
[79] One more vague and possible reference to China may be mentioned. A remarkable document of a 9th century Jew mentions that at the age of 18 he left "the land of Tubal" and wandered through "seas, islands and deserts" until he arrived in Babylon. Internal evidence suggests that he was of the school of Hiwi al-Balkhi (i.e. of Balkh in Afghanistan). This Tubal is the country which Saadya identifies as China. *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) 345–374.

CHAPTER VII

THE JEWISH KINGDOM OF THE KHAZARS

WE have now to consider a country which in itself is insignificant compared with the three huge empires of which we have already spoken—the Carolingian, the Mohammedan, and the Chinese—but the importance of which, for the Radanites, cannot be overestimated.

Part of the fourth and last route of the Radanites passed "through the country of the Slavs." They "arrive at Khamlif, the capital of the Khazars." There "they embark on the Jorjan Sea, arrive at Balkh."

Khazaria corresponds roughly to the Crimea of to-day, though it was more extensive. It is well known to students of Jewish history. In the 10th century, the famous Spanish-Jewish statesman and Maecenas of Jewish learning, Chasdai ibn Shaprut (915–990), heard from a merchant from Khorasan[1] of the existence of an independent Jewish kingdom of the Khazars. After many difficulties and disappointments, he finally succeeded in establishing contact with them,[2] and the reply to his letter which reached the then reigning king, Joseph, completely confirmed what he had been told. Chasdai was informed *inter alia* of the

[1] This shows that a journey from Khorasan, the most easterly province of the Eastern Caliphate, to the western confines of the Mohammedan Empire, was quite a normal thing—a fact of which the significance does not need to be stressed.

[2] The difficulty which Chasdai experienced in establishing contact with Khazaria may appear strange in view of the regular fourth route of the Radanites. In the first place, however, it is probable that the Radanite activity had ceased by this time (see chapter XX); and in the second, the fourth route did not touch Islamic territory for a considerable time till after it had passed through the land of the Khazars. Chasdai was probably unaware of it, if it still existed. In effect the route which the letter took followed that of the

conversion of the first king, Bulan, to Judaism, about the year 740.[3]

We thus see that during the whole period of the activity of the Radanites, the kingdom of the Khazars, through which they had to pass in their journey from the Slavonic countries to Khorasan, of which Balkh was the capital,[4] was ruled by their coreligionists.

This in itself must have contributed greatly to facilitate their activities; but the importance of Khazaria in the system of communications in the world at the time, and the role played by the Jews in its economic development, were also powerful factors in rendering the operations of the Radanites possible.

"Although the Khazars," says the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "are an historic figure upon the borderlands of Europe and Asia for at least nine hundred years, the epoch of their greatness is from 600–950,"[5] in other words, during the period of their Judaisation, which includes the period of the Radanites. "They were," continues the same authority, "the Venetians of the Caspian Sea and the Euxine, the organisers of the transit between the two basins, the universal carriers between East and West, and Itil[6] was the meeting place of the commerce of Persia,

Radanites—a proof that there was constant communication between Khazaria and the "king of the Gebalim" (Poland). Jacob b. Eliezer נמצי ultimately brought the letter to Poland. (נמצי = of Nemzi, a German settlement on the Polish-Silesian frontier.) Then he proceeded via Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary, South Russia and Bulgaria, to Itil, which succeeded Khamlif as the capital. (See chapter XV and note 6.) This is substantially the fourth route (cf. Shipper, Hebrew ed., p. 31; Yiddish p. 37). Moreover, as late as the twelfth century, Petahia of Ratisbon arrived at Baghdad by almost the same route (see *Travels of Petahia of Ratisbon*; ed. Benisch, 1861).

[3] The historical incident of the conversion of Bulan must be clearly differentiated from the religious discussion in the romantic philosophical work *The Kuzari* which Judah Halevi based on it.

[4] See Chapter IV.

[5] *Enc. Brit.*, 13th ed., Vol. 15, p. 774.

[6] Itil, probably the modern Astrakhan (Müller, *Stromsystem des Wolga*, p. 557), replaced the earlier Khamledge or Kalendsch (the Khamlif of Ibn Khordadbeh) as the capital.

Byzantium, Armenia, Russia and the Bulgarians of the Middle Volga." [7]

Khazaria, as has been stated, coincides roughly with the modern Crimea, and a glance at the map[8] shows the strategical trade position which it occupied. There was a close connection between its sudden leap into importance, the conversion of the ruling family, together with the nobles, to Judaism, and the expansion of its trade. That these things took place at the same time was no mere coincidence. There were almost certainly Jews resident in the country from the earliest times, but their numbers greatly increased after 723, when they were expelled from the neighbouring Byzantium and sought a home among the Khazars.[9] It was only a few years later that they successfully contended with the Mohammedans and Christians for the conversion to their own religion of a hitherto pagan people, their victory being crowned by the acceptance of Judaism by Bulan in 740. This conversion did not in any way adversely affect the adherents of the other faiths, and Khazaria stood out as a shining example of religious tolerance. Judges were appointed for all three communities as well as for those who still adhered to paganism, and Khazaria during the period of its greatness represents "an organised state on the borderland of Europe and Asia," [10] and a place of "flourishing trade . . . in a time when fanaticism, ignorance and anarchy reigned supreme in Western Europe." [11] Although therefore at the zenith of its power merchants of many lands and divers peoples met in the marts of Itil,[12] and found protection and good faith in the

[7] *Enc. Brit.*, loc. cit. Heyd, I, pp. 47, 61 and 77, also points out the importance of Khazaria in the trade of the time.
[8] Cf., for instance, the map in *J.E.* IV, p. 2.
[9] Shipper, Heb., p. 29.
[10] Margolis and Marx, *History of the Jews*, p. 525.
[11] *J.E.* IV, pp. 1–7.
[12] Margolis and Marx, p. 526.

Khazar cities, it was the Jews who were in the best position to take full advantage of these conditions. They alone had contacts westwards with the Jews in Christian Europe and the still unchristianised Slavonic lands, and eastwards and southwards with the large and flourishing Jewish communities of the eastern caliphate. The result was that "in the kingdom of the Khazars, favourably situated as it was between the Caliphate of Baghdad and the Byzantine Empire, Jews evidently played an important economic role. During the 9th and 10th centuries the territory of the Khazars was traversed by one of the great trade routes which connected the three parts of the Old World," [13] and there is much evidence of the close relationship and connection between the Jews of Khazaria and their coreligionists in Khorasan in the south, in both Jewish and Arabic sources.[14] It was they therefore who developed the trade of the kingdom. The Western European Jewish traders had trade colonies on their routes strongly protected by the Khazarian kings,[15] and an Arabic author, ibn Fakih, about the year 900, testifies to the fact that on the routes of the "Slav merchants trading between the sea of the Khazars [the Caspian] and that of Rum [the Black Sea] was found the Jewish city of Samkers, on the Taman Peninsula near the Crimea." [16] There can be no doubt therefore of the important role played by the Jews and their constant trading activity through and beyond the kingdom during this vital period.

We have certain vague but instructive references pointing to contact between the Jews of Khazaria and other points on the Radanite Routes. The statement of Eldad

[13] S. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*; Jewish Publication Society, 1916; p. 22.
[14] W. Fischel, "Jews of Central Asia", in *Historia Judaica*, April 1945, p. 48.
[15] Shipper (Heb.), p. 30.
[16] Dubnow, p. 23, quoting De Goeje, *Bibl.* V, p. 271.

Ha-Dani, according to one reading, that the tribes of Simeon and the half-tribe of Manasseh are to be found in the land of the Khazars,[17] indicates knowledge on his part of the existence of an independent Jewish kingdom there.[18] The intercourse between Khorasan and Khazaria has already been mentioned. There is in addition a portion of a letter extant sent by a Jew of Khazaria to Chasdai ibn Shaprut,[19] and conversely there is a letter sent by Chasdai to Constantine Porphyrogenitos (912–959) and his consort, the Empress Helena of Constantine, containing a reference to the "land of the Khazars". The date of the document coincides with the embassy of Constantine to Cordova in 944–9.[20]

The statement in the letter of Joseph, King of the Khazars, to Chasdai, that "our eyes are turned to the wise men who dwell in Jerusalem and Babylon,"[21] suggests that there was direct and constant communication between Khazaria on the one hand, and Baghdad and Palestine on the other. That there was such communication with Baghdad has already been demonstrated; the case of Palestine is not so clear, but presumptive evidence is afforded by the fact that Chasdai attempted to send his letter to Khazaria via Jerusalem,[22] and in the 12th century, Petahia proceeded from Khazaria to Jerusalem.[23]

Among the commodities carried by the Radanites were furs. This article is not to be found at any of the points of the various routes taken by them. It is possible that they obtained them at the western extremity of their European

17 Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, p. 9. *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) I, p. 103.
18 See my "Eldad ha-Dani and China", in the *J.Q.R.*
19 *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) III, pp. 189–219.
20 J. Mann, *Texts and Studies*; Cincinnati, 1931; pp. 11–12.
21 E. Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, p. 36.
22 Ibid.
23 *Travels of Petahia.*

route, after they had been conveyed thither from Northern Europe, but the possibility is not excluded, and it is in fact more probable, that they picked them up in Khamlif, since furs were among the most important commodities reaching Khazaria from the Volga.[24] If this fact could be established, it would invest this fourth route with an added importance. When we come to consider it in detail,[25] it will be shown that the sole reason for the choice of this route was that it was the only one on which the Radanites could pick up one of their most valuable, if unpleasant, commodities, namely, slaves.[26] If furs are added, this would be further proof that the route was chosen entirely on account of the trade opportunities which it offered.[27] But whether this be so or not, so important was the kingdom of the Khazars to the Radanite routes that the fourth route is hardly conceivable without its existence, and the date at which the known activity of the Radanites ended coincides with the end of the Jewish kingdom of the Khazars.[28]

24 E.B., loc. cit., p. 776.
25 See Chapter XV.
26 See Chapter XVII.
27 To some extent this refers to swords also. See Chapter XVII.
28 See Chapter XX.

CHAPTER VIII

REVIEW

It is convenient at this stage to sum up what has been said in the previous seven chapters and to give a general picture of the lands which the Radanites had to traverse on their trading expeditions from Christian Europe in the West to the Chinese Empire in the East, giving special consideration to the position and distribution of the Jews and their communication facilities.

In this picture we see the world divided into three of the largest empires that history has known, the Christian empire of the Carolingians, stretching from the Atlantic in the west to the Oder and the Elbe in the east, and including all those lands which acknowledged the religious authority of the Pope; the lands under the domination of the Crescent, stretching from west to east in an unbroken line for seven thousand miles, from the Pillars of Hercules to the Chinese borders, and including Spain, Morocco, Algiers, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Babylonia and Persia, to which are to be added the islands of the Mediterranean, Arabia and at least the Province of Sind in India; while east of Persia began the Chinese Empire of the T'ang dynasty, from the eastern boundary of Persia to the Pacific.

To those three large territories must be added the small but important independent Jewish kingdom of Khazaria, and also a small portion of "no-man's-land", the still pagan territories of what was then called Slavonia, and is now roughly the countries of Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria.

Political conditions at the time throughout the world were such as to encourage freedom of movement. In the Carolingian Empire, it is true, the blocking of the trade routes had caused a definite retrogression in the standards of living. On the other hand, however, the pacification, unification and extension of the Empire had enabled such civilisation as existed at the time to spread from France across Germany to the borders of the Slavonic lands, and Charlemagne had paid special attention to the development of trade and communications. In the Islamic Empire, regular and much frequented caravan routes stretched from one end to the other. As we have seen in a particular instance, there was nothing to prevent a merchant from Khorasan, which borders on China, proceeding to Spain. The roads were kept in good condition and the routes were well marked and defined. The same applied to the T'ang Empire. The barrier formed by the hostile savage tribes inhabiting the territory between the eastern border of the caliphate and the pre-T'ang Chinese Empire had been broken down and the border made contiguous with that of the adjacent Islamic territory. Communications were improved and every facility afforded for trade and commerce.

The kingdom of the Khazars, ruled by a Jewish king, was also at the height of its prosperity, a prosperity which evinced itself in an active and flourishing international trade with the countries to the west, the north (Russia) and the south (Khorasan).

In these four sections of the world the position of the Jews was utterly different from what it had ever been in them before, and on the whole incomparably better. In Christian Europe they had been transformed from an oppressed, persecuted, unwanted element, sharing their

trade with the Syrians, to a privileged, prosperous class enjoying a trade monopoly as a result of the exclusion of their Syrian rivals; and in addition the extension of the Empire eastwards, coupled with the permission granted to the Jews to take up residence in whatever place they desired, led to a corresponding spread of Jewish communities.

In the Islamic world the Mohammedan rule had brought a tremendous revival to the Jews of the Empire. Here dwelt the overwhelming majority of the Jews of the world. The spiritual centre of world Jewry was in Babylon, and in every country under Mohammedan rule, in North Africa, Egypt , Palestine, Syria, Babylonia and Persia, Jews dwelt in large numbers. Here also they took full advantage of the favourable conditions to spread eastwards as far as India, in which country we now get the first certain evidence of Jewish settlement. The same applies to the settlement of Jews in China. The breaking down of the barriers between that country and Persia opened the way to the first influx of Jews into China, and once they were in India, they could follow the normal routes of Chinese merchants between India and China, by sea. Hence there sprang up between the Mohammedan countries, India and China, an unbroken chain of Jewish communities. "We accordingly, in early contemporary accounts, find them scattered on these main routes from Arabia to China, at Bokhara, Khotan and Samarkand, at Kis and at Cranganore, at Quilon and at Zayton." [1] Between these various communities there was a constant and active communication, of which the Geonic Responsa afford us ample evidence. The general picture is one of "constant Jewish movement from France and Spain to Egypt, Syria, Baghdad and back," [2] and to that statement we can add "from Baghdad to China and back." The Jews travelled along the land routes from Khorasan to China, and established trade colonies in the larger cities. China enters for the first time into the literature of the Jews of Babylonia, and Babylonian and Persian Jews found their way into this hitherto unknown territory. In contrast to the utter and complete isolation of the Chinese Jews of the Kai-feng-fu during the last three centuries, the picture of them given in this century is one of close association with their coreligionists.[3]

[1] Jacobs, p. 198.

These Jewish settlements in India and China are therefore to be regarded as the furthest outposts of Jewish traders of the Mohammedan Empire. Nor was this the only result of the facilities of trade thus opened up. Another was the decisive change which came over the economic character of the Jews of these countries. From an essentially agricultural community they change into a predominantly trading one, and the era of Jewish merchants begins. Until the geonic period there are no signs of any special predilection or capacity for commerce shown by the Jews. We find their special aptitudes in this direction developed in the early geonic period, where they are everywhere mentioned as merchants. "The cause for this sudden commercial activity and predilection for trading is probably to be found in the rise of Islam and its control of the lands whence came most of the luxuries demanded in Europe." [4]

In Khazaria the situation of the Jews was most favourable of all. Under the protection of kings of their own faith, in contact with Jews of the East and West and South,

[2] *Legacy of Israel*, p. 288.
[3] Cf. Heyd, Vol. I, Chap. 2.
[4] *J.E.*, IV, 188.

they developed the trade of that country to an unexampled degree.

From this consideration of the separate four compartments, so to speak, of the Radanite train we turn to a consideration of the system of inter-communication between the compartments. It has been said previously that there was nothing to prevent a merchant travelling from Spain to Khorasan, from one extremity of the Mohammedan Empire to another. But in addition to this, it has been pointed out in the chapters dealing with the Jews in India and China that once the barrier of the Oxus and the Makran desert had been passed, there was nothing to prevent the further expansion of the Jews eastward to those countries. It will be shown clearly and without shadow of doubt when we come to the consideration of the separate routes of the Radanites that, far from their being hardy pioneers blazing a new trail across unknown territory, they followed the well-defined tracks of the Arab merchants in all their routes. Both their sea and their land voyages followed those taken by Arab merchants, and as far as the overwhelmingly larger part of these routes is concerned, they merely took the same paths as these merchants did. In other words, just as there was nothing to prevent a merchant from journeying from Cordova to Khorasan, so there was nothing to prevent him from continuing on that same route further east to India and China. Or, if he so desired, he could travel by land across the narrow isthmus which separates the Mediterranean from the Red Sea, and then proceed by sea to India and China. Or he could sail down the Tigris from Baghdad to Basra and thence via the Persian Gulf to India and China. In the same way the very essence of the trade and prosperity of the Khazars was its entrepôt nature. These were the normal trade and com-

munication routes, and that they should have been taken by the Radanites is a fact which does not excite any special comment.

It is when we come to consider the possibilities of similar communication between the Frankish Empire and its adjacent territory, Mohammedan Spain, that we find cause for surprise. For it has been pointed out that the blocking of the trade routes between Christian Europe and the East consequent upon the stranglehold exercised by the Mohammedans upon the Mediterranean is the supremely important and essential cause of the lapse of Europe into the Dark Ages. No Christian could travel with impunity in Islamic countries, nor a Mohammedan in Christian. Could the Jews? The whole existence of the Radanite routes which started from "the land of the Franks" depends upon this one possibility. Once they had crossed safely into Islamic territory they entered the normal stream of commerce which carried them on its current to India and China. In their ability to cross over to that territory alone lies the unique character of these Jewish merchants. Once this is established, their further progress becomes normal and natural, and it is to an examination of this all-important point that the next chapter is devoted.[5]

There were other points of resemblance between the Jewish and Moslem merchants besides their use of the same trade routes. Sir T. W. Arnold, in his discussion on "Arab travellers and Merchants 1000–1500"[6] notes as two features which gave a special stimulus to commerce the

[5] A further possibility, that of a cross-country route from the eastern borders of the Frankish Empire through Slavonia to Khazaria, will be discussed in Chapter XV.

[6] Chapter 5 of E. Power's *Travel and Travellers in the Middle Ages.*

honourable place accorded to merchants in the Koran,[7] and the *camaraderie* of the Moslem world. "The journey of the Muslim traveller," he says, "was facilitated by the brotherhood of Islam, which gave to the Mohammedan world its composite character. However many hundreds of miles the Muslim might travel from his native town, he could confidently hope for a welcome and generous hospitality at the hands of his coreligionists, especially if he had any reputation for piety or religious knowledge." [8]

These remarks apply with equal if not indeed with greater force to the brotherhood of Israel. The Moslem's favourable attitude to trade is shared by the Jew, and can be contrasted with the Papal bull of the time against Christians trading with the infidel.[9] It is true that the bull was not regarded seriously by these merchants,[10] but it is still in contrast to the active encouragement given by the other faiths.

Similarly, the individual Jewish travelling merchant could always be sure of a warm welcome at the hands of his coreligionists.[11] "Letters of introduction were found in that inexhaustible archive the Cairo-Fustat genizah which assured a foreign Jew, pilgrim, merchant, or Rabbi, a brotherly reception in a far-distant community. A Spanish community, for example, recommends a French Jew who had lost his considerable fortune . . . to the benevolence of Fustat Jewry." [12] Nor was the assistance confined to mere hospitality. Information could be obtained concerning conditions and possibilities of trade, markets, prices, etc.[13]

[7] Ibid., pp. 92–93.
[8] Ibid., p. 89.
[9] E. Power, ibid., p. 187.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Caro, I, p. 196.
[12] Baron, *S.R.H.* I, 323.
[13] Shipper, p. 30.

The linguistic difficulties between East and West were insuperable in the case of everyone except Jews, who had Hebrew as a common medium of expression.[14] They also benefited greatly from the uniformity of Jewish law and commercial custom. "The uniformity of Jewish law and the Jewish administration of justice throughout the world, also gave an easy advantage to the Jewish international trader over his Gentile competitor. . . . A Jew from Baghdad could easily draw up a contract with a coreligionist from Marseilles, using exactly the same terminology and knowing that, by bringing the contracting party before the Jewish court of either city, he could obtain full justice." [15]

Finally, the Jewish traders profited by the development in Jewish commercial custom of the credit system among Jews long before it came into use in Christian countries, for "it was the credit system which, with the greatest probability, helped commerce to reach at an early date the point it had attained." [16]

The fact that the first mention of the Radanites is found in the earliest of the Arab geographers whose work has come down to us raises the interesting question whether the Radanites may not have been active centuries before Ibn Khordadbeh, and lacked only a chronicler or recorder. The Russian Jewish Encyclopedia[17] actually asserts that "from the seventh to the middle of the tenth century the Radanites were the only merchants in the West in the Middle Ages," thus placing the commencement of their activity at least two centuries before Ibn Khordadbeh. This statement, however, cannot be accepted. Not only is no authority adduced for it, but it is perfectly clear that the activity of

[14] Baron, op. cit., p. 322.
[15] Ibid., p. 323.
[16] Pirenne, *Med. Hist.*, p. 113.
[17] XIII, 267.

the Radanites was rendered possible only by the unique conditions which obtained in the 9th century—the rise of the Carolingian Empire, the extension of the Islamic, the consolidation of the T'ang, the existence of the Jewish kingdom of the Khazaria, and, above all, the blocking of the trade routes for other than Jews between the Christian and Mohammedan worlds.

CHAPTER IX

THE RADANITE "FERRY"

WE now come to the point which is of crucial importance in determining our estimate of the Radanites and the part they played in the history of commerce. As we have seen, there is little in their journeys from the most westerly frontiers of Mohammedan Spain to the cities on China's east coast to call for comment or special notice, since they almost certainly followed the same routes as contemporaneous Arab merchants.[1] The interest of the Radanites lies in their having been able as Jews to accomplish what neither Christian nor Mohammedan merchants could do, namely, to pass with impunity from one sphere to the other. According to the Jewish Encyclopedia: "Christians could not trade in Mohammedan countries nor Moslems in Christendom, consequently an opening was left for Jews, who were tolerated in both spheres, as commercial intermediaries."[2] Can this statement be substantiated?

In connection with this question, it is to be noted that, although the trade routes were completely blocked between Christendom and Islam, a certain amount of commodities did filter through. Two routes connecting Europe with the Orient still stood open, the one via Venice to the Levant and Constantinople, the other, a more hazardous route, via Flanders, across Europe to Russia and down the Dnieper to Constantinople or via the Volga to

[1] This does not apply to the first part of the fourth Radanite route. Nor do the Arabs appear to have used the land route to China to the extent that the Radanites did. These various points of difference will be discussed in their appropriate places.

[2] *J.E.*, IV, 188

Baghdad.[3] There is, however, one fundamental difference between these routes and those of the Radanites. Both the Levant and Baghdad were in Moslem hands, and the *merchants* from Christian countries could not travel thither. "Christendom was excluded from the Eastern Seas, and had to buy silks and spices of the Muslims at Alexandria and Aleppo. Thus the principal trade of the world in the Middle Ages came to be conducted in two separate compartments. *The goods went through but not the men.*"[4]

If, however, Ibn Khordadbeh can be relied upon, it was not only the goods, *but the men also* who went through, and it is this which constitutes the unique position of the Radanites.

On the question of this possibility opinions are sharply divided among scholars. They range from a flat denial that Jews could have travelled with impunity through warring lands, or have crossed from the lands of Islam to those of Christendom and vice versa,[5] through a disparaging estimate of the possible extent of such trade,[6] to an attribution to the Radanites of solid services to medieval trade by virtue of the special circumstances of their activities,[7] and culminate in the categorical statement that it was the very fact of the blocking of the trade routes which afforded the Radanites the opportunity that freely flowing trade channels would have denied them.[8]

It is worth while elaborating these views in the actual

[3] E. Power, *Travel and Travellers in the Middle Ages.* "The greatness of Constantinople during the early Middle Ages was in part based on the continuance of the land traffic through the Balkan peninsula and Asia Minor. The Saracen and Moorish fleets had rendered the Mediterranean unsafe". *Enc. Brit.*, 14th ed., Vol. 22, p. 370.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Meyendorf, see below.

[6] Pirenne, see Chapters II and XXI.

[7] Heyd, see below. Also Jacobs, but in an exaggerated form.

[8] Baron, see below.

words of their authors, three of them acknowledged authorities on medieval trade and economic history, and the fact that they disagree so profoundly and fundamentally does not absolve us from the duty of carefully considering their arguments, nor from that of examining them afresh on the basis of evidence which none of them has considered. We may, however, ignore the first view, that of Pirenne, since, as has been stated earlier, he appears to have retracted it later and to have recognised the important part which the Radanites played in early medieval trade.

The champion of the Radanites is W. Heyd.[9] He accords them full credit for keeping open the channels of international trade, notes in corroboration of Ibn Khordadbeh that one of the Radanite routes to China is identical with that given by Suleyman, a "*marchand arabe*",[10] for Chinese merchants, and points out that the uninterrupted chain of Jewish communities from Spain to China provided the necessary conditions for their travel. He clinches his argument with the observation that the prosperity of the Jews in Europe under the Carolingians, which was very great, could be ascribed to these vast commercial enterprises.

Heyd is roundly taken to task by Meyendorf.[11] At first the latter appears to give due weight to the role played by Jews in the international trade of the period reviewed by him. In addition to his rather colourless introductory statement that, "besides the travels of the pilgrims, the Vikings and the Arabs in our period, there were two other types of travellers who added considerably to the know-

[9] *Histoire du Commerce du Levant*, 2 Vols.; 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1936; Vol. I, pp. 125 ff.; cf. also p. 30.

[10] See Chapter XIX.

[11] *Travel and Travellers*, Chap. VI: "Trade and Communications in Eastern Europe from 800–1209", by A. Meyendorf.

ledge of the world among the Western peoples, namely the Jews, among whom Benjamin of Tudela may be considered the most prominent",[12] he makes the much more positive statement: "The conflux of people of various nationalities at Alexandria, Baghdad, Damascus, in comparatively out of the way places like Kiev, Novgorod, Wisby, at Itil and Bolgar on the Volga, at Prague and Ratisbon (Regensburg) on the Danube, and Jumna on the Oder seems to indicate a considerable intensity of international life between the eighth and twelfth centuries. *This is, as it were, confirmed by . . . the variety of countries where the Jews were domiciled.*"[13]

He fails, however, to carry this promising line of inquiry to its logical conclusion, because of his insistence on the impossibility of free movement of Jewish traders "under the conditions of universal warfare prevailing between 800 and 1200, especially in the eastern half of Europe,"[14] and he makes the following curious criticism of Heyd: "The historian often tries to operate with a very few general and preconceived assumptions derived from his own experience and immediate observation. Thus Heyd, the historian of the trade of the time, makes the rather surprising assumption that the Jews, during the internecine wars among the Christians, were circulating freely amid the warring peoples without arousing suspicion and were consequently making large profits. This estimate of the advantages of the extra-territorial position of the Jews, Heyd apparently derives from his observation of modern, even of very

[12] Page 105.
[13] Page 122. It is not clear whether Meyendorf is referring to the Jewish communities of the places mentioned. But the existence, as also the importance, of the Jewish communities of Alexandria, Baghdad, Damascus, Itil (capital of Khazaria), Prague and Ratisbon has been, or will be, amply demonstrated.
[14] Page 109. It was, of course, only the fourth route which traversed eastern Europe.

recent, and apparently temporary and sporadic conditions of toleration."[15] Quite apart from the fact that Heyd, far from "making a rather surprising assumption", is quoting a document of undoubted and unimpeachable authenticity, and quite apart from the strange reference to the "extra-territorial advantage" possessed by modern Jews of thirty years ago, the charge of basing his assumptions on the observation of modern conditions can surely be levelled against the critic. He has obviously fallen into the error of assuming the existence of modern conditions of war in the 8th and 9th centuries. War in those days was largely confined to professional soldiers with sometimes only slight dislocation of ordinary civilian pursuits and of trade.[16]

Lastly[17] comes Baron.[18] In complete contrast to Meyendorf he sees in the very separation of the world into two compartments a golden opportunity for the Jews, of which they eagerly availed themselves, for acquiring a veritable monopoly of international trade. "A new stimulus was given to Jewish commerce by the rigid separation between East and West," he remarks. Not only were the cultural and economic demands of the West growing, but the East was suffering from a dire shortage of labour. "A class mediating between the two elements was bound to arise," and it was provided by the Jews, the Radanite merchants.

Which of these authorities is right? Could the Jews or could they not, in the 9th century, pass with impunity through the otherwise impenetrable barrier which separated Christianity from Islam? More specifically, the problem resolves itself into the question whether it

[15] Page 106.
[16] Cf., e.g., H. A. L. Fisher, *History of Europe*, p. 474.
[17] I omit such secondary authorities as Caro, Jacobs and Roth, whose views more or less coincide with those of Baron.
[18] *S.R.H.*, pp. 321–2.

was possible for these merchants to cross the borders which separated the two empires at one or other of the following points: from Christian France to Mohammedan Spain, from Christian Italy to Mohammedan North Africa, from the Carolingian Empire through the Slavonic countries to Baghdad, and generally from Europe to Palestine. Once this possibility is established, all doubts as to the existence and activity of the Radanites is removed. The world lay open to them as far as India and China.

In seeking an answer to this question we need not necessarily confine ourselves to the 9th century. The conditions which obtained then continued undisturbed and unaltered, except for minor adjustments, until the Tartar conquest of the 13th century. The barriers remained up. "Islam, the hereditary foe of Christendom, lay like a wall between Europe and the trade routes to the East."[19] Proof, therefore, that at any time during those centuries of division, Jewish merchants and travellers could and did pass freely from one part to another is valid for all the rest of the period.

Of the three authorities mentioned above, Baron is the only one who as much as mentions contemporary Jewish sources, and in these sources, scattered and fragmentary though they are, we find conclusive evidence to justify his opinion. From the period of the Carolingians, the contemporaries of the Radanites, down to the end of the Mohammedan (and subsequently Mohammedan-Turkish) stranglehold on international communications, we have continuous evidence of complete freedom of

[19] See the whole interesting chapter from which this quotation is taken, by Eileen Power in *Travel and Travellers*. It is a brilliant vindication of the much maligned Tartars, but is vitiated by one serious misstatement. Ignoring both the Radanites and such Jewish travellers as Benjamin of Tudela and Petahia of Ratisbon (see later), she accords to the two friars, John of Pian de Carpine (1245–47) and William of Rubruck (1251–54) "the imperishable glory of pioneers" because "for the first time since Alexander the Great" they blazed a route from East to West.

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movement for Jews, whether as traders, travellers or scholars, between the Christian and Mohammedan worlds.

The first mention of a Jew travelling from the Carolingian Empire to Baghdad is that of Isaac, who headed the famous embassy of Charlemagne to Haroun-al-Raschid (797–802). It is, of course, not likely that an ordinary Jew could travel with the same ease as a member of an embassy from one powerful monarch to another, but it is reasonable to suppose that "from the time of Charlemagne's mission to Haroun there must have been frequent communication between the Jews of Gaul and those of Babylonia."[20] In the first place, we have evidence, somewhat doubtful, it is true, of a Babylonian Jew named Machir returning with the embassy,[21] and in the second place, it is just after this time that we hear of the first contacts between the Jews of France and those of Babylon. Hai b. Sherira, Gaon of Pumbedita (939–1038) reports that the Jews of Gaul possessed mystical works dating from Natronai II b. Hillel (early 9th century).[22] France is first mentioned in the Responsa of the Geonim about 850,[23] and Zunz surmises that it is not unlikely that the connection of the Jews of France with the Babylonian academics owes its origin to the journey of Isaac.[24] So the anecdote of the Jewish merchant "who often visited Palestine", who was used by Charlemagne to play a trick on a credulous bishop, though only an anecdote, affords us a vivid and accurate picture of the activity of Jewish merchants, their methods, and the enormous prices they could command for exotic

[20] Katz, p. 68.
[21] See Chapter XIX.
[22] *Ta'am Zekenim*, ed. Frankfurt, 1852; pp. 55a–56a; cf. Katz, p. 68.
[23] *Responsa Sha'are Zedek*, ed. Salonica; No. 12, p. 20b; cf. Ginzberg, *Geonica* II, p. 55, note 1, and Mann, *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) VII, 489.
[24] "Geographical Literature of the Jews", in Vol. II of Asher's *Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, p. 243.

articles obtainable from no other source.[25] Its main interest for our inquiry, however, lies in the casualness of the reference to the frequent visits of a Jewish merchant of the court of Charlemagne to Mohammedan Palestine.[26] Other proofs from non-Jewish sources are the charter of Louis the Pious given to Abraham of Saragossa in Spain,[27] and a reference to Judaeus Hebraeus, a member of an embassy from Barcelona to Charles the Bald,[28] while the visit to Prague in the year 965 of Ibrahim ibn Yakub of Spain is cited as an "instance symbolic of far-reaching mercantile relations".[29]

To revert to Jewish sources. There is extant a responsum dated 810 containing the answers which the Jews of Rome gave to the Gaon Sar Shalom.[30] In the 12th century Isaac b. Darbelo saw in Worms a question sent by the Jews of the Rhine to Jerusalem concerning the advent of the Messiah. The context shows that there were other contacts besides this.[31] Among the fragments from the Cairo Genizah published by Ginzberg[32] are two which have a direct bearing upon our subject. One[33] preserves a question sent by Hai Gaon to Barco, a place in Italy. In this case there is an element of doubt, as the reference may be to Barco in Egypt.[34] In the second fragment, however,[35] a

[25] Caro I, pp. 128–9.
[26] This is strictly in accordance with what we know of the literary and religious history of the Jews of France and Germany, who come more under Palestinian than Babylonian influence; cf. Waxman, *History of Jewish Literature*, Vol. I, p. 256.
[27] See Chapter I.
[28] Caro, op. cit., note 3, p. 471.
[29] Baron, *S.R.H.* I, 322. His account is to be found in *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de S. Petersburg*, 1898, VIII, 3. A German translation is available by G. Jacob, *Arabische Berichte von Gesandten an Germanische Fürstenhofe aus dem 9 und 10 Jahrhundert*.
[30] Sha'are Dura, para. 81.
[31] A. Büchler, *R.E.J.* LIV, pp. 237 ff.
[32] *Geonica*, Vol. II; New York, 1909.
[33] 7th Responsum of Fragment 2680, etc.
[34] Ibid, note.
[35] Page 55.

responsum from Meshullam b. Kalonymos, one of the founders of Jewish learning in Europe, to Sherira and Hai Gaon towards the end of the 10th century, there is no such ambiguity. "Our fragment establishes beyond a doubt," comments Ginzberg, "that Italian and French scholars stood in correspondence with the Geonim of Babylon."

Two later documents from the Genizah may be quoted to show this constant movement between the Christian and Mohammedan worlds, in addition to that quoted in the previous chapter in which a French Jew is recommended to the benevolence of Cairo Jewry. One gives a remarkable picture of this traffic. A Jew, Moses, called Ibn Amram, son of Jacob al-Qabisi, pleads his cause before the Beth Din of Kairouan in 1034. His father, Jacob, had died in Sicily, his father's brother, Sahlun, in Alexandria. His mother, Jammama, came from Marseilles, his brother, Joseph, had been resident in Tripoli, but at the moment was in Egypt. Moses himself had lived in Sicily![36]

In the following century we have a letter from Abraham, son of Maimonides, in which a French Jew, Joseph b. Gershon, Dayyan at Alexandria, complains that another Dayyan had insulted not only him, but all French Jews, on account of their anthropomorphic conception of God.[37]

The works of Rashi (1035–1104) and the Tosafists of two generations later are replete with references to Jews from Palestine. In addition, we have mention of "our Rabbi hearing from a Jew from Greece that 'Philosophy' in Greek means 'a lover of wisdom'",[38] and a question asked of a Jewish traveller whether the Euphrates flows into Palestine.[39]

[36] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) XVI, p. 575.
[37] D. Simonsen, "Maimoniana", in Guttman, *Festschrift*, pp. 210–224; cf. Baron, *S.R.H.* III, 81.
[38] Tos. Shabbat, p. 116a.
[39] Tos. Bekhorot, p. 44b.

We have finally the evidence provided by the famous and almost contemporary Jewish travellers, Benjamin of Tudela (1165–1173) and Petahia of Ratisbon (1170–1187), both of whom passed between Christian and Mohammedan lands.[40]

There is nothing in their accounts to suggest that they thought they were unique or were doing anything exceptional. They are known to posterity because they wrote diaries (Petahia's was even written for him). There must have been many travellers and traders who were not so gifted in a literary way! Had their journey been exceptional, the arrival of two European Jews in Baghdad within one decade would surely have caused a sensation, and we should have expected Petahia's account to make some reference to the fact that another European Jew had been in Baghdad and the other places visited by both. This is admittedly an *argumentum a silentio*; but this cannot be said of his statement that, "it is customary there (in Nineveh) that when a travelling Jew dies the sultan takes half of his property,"[41] which certainly suggests that Jewish travellers frequently passed through the town, a key-point in East-West communications. He mentions the transit from Christian to Mohammedan countries in the most offhand manner possible. "R. Petahia passed into the land of Togarma. From thence and further on, people believe in the law of Mahomet."[42] These words hardly point to a dramatic forcing of the gates into forbidden territory. Lastly, we have the decisive fact that during the visit of Petahia[43] Palestine was in the hands of the Crusaders,

[40] Petahia started from Christian Europe, and Benjamin went from Tudela, which was in Christian Spain, to Rome, and thence to Islamic territory.
[41] Benisch, p. 11.
[42] Ibid., p. 7.
[43] Ibid., note 37, p. 85. Adler, p. 64.

and yet he passed safely and uneventfully from Baghdad to Damascus and on to Palestine. Of the restrictions on Christian merchants Power writes[44]: "In Palestine and Syria the Christians still held a remnant of the Crusading States with a valuable row of ports, and by treaty with the Sultans at their back door were allowed to travel a few miles inland to the busy cities of Aleppo and Damascus. But beyond that, to the great mart of Baghdad, the centre of the whole district, and along the trade routes of the Persian Gulf, they might not go." Finally, we have Petahia's explicit statement[45] that the authority of the Head of the College of Baghdad, Samuel, was acknowledged in the Land of Israel. As Benisch points out,[46] although the political connection between Palestine and Babylon was severed, the religious union of the Jews (with the contact which it implied) still continued. In short, neither Petahia nor Benjamin blazed a trail. They were normal Jewish travellers following a recognised trade route which took them without incident from Christian Europe to the Mohammedan world.

The rapid dissemination of the works of Jews of Christian countries in Mohammedan, and vice versa, is also positive evidence of such intercourse.

Rashi's familiarity with the "Mahbereth" of Menahem ibn Saruk and the work of Dunash ibn Labrat of Fez is well known,[47] while ample proof exists of his knowledge of geonic literature.[48] Finally we have the fact that the works of Saadya Gaon (892–942) are quoted by nearly all the Franco-German authorities as early as the 11th century.[49]

[44] Op. cit., p. 122.
[45] Page 19.
[46] See note 43.
[47] Cf. Weiss, *Toledot Rabbenu Shlomo b. Isaac*; Vienna, 1882; p. 52.
[48] Ibid., pp. 14–15.
[49] See the list in Malter, *Life and Works of Saadya Gaon*, p. 286.

The facts given do not exhaust the available evidence, and the general conclusion is irresistible. The Jews, throughout all the centuries of the division of the world between Christianity and Islam, passed freely without let or hindrance across the borders between them, and the historicity of the Radanite routes can be accepted as established.

CHAPTER X

JEWISH SHIPS

THERE is one more point to be discussed before we turn to a detailed examination of the actual routes taken by the Radanites. On what ships did the Radanites cross the Mediterranean? It is a question which concerns the first two routes, in one of which "they take ship in the land of the Franks and steer for Farama," while in the second they "carry their goods from the land of the Franks in the Western Sea, making for Antioch." What ships sailed from Christian to Mahommedan ports? It is possible that the "land of the Franks" includes Italy,[1] and that they travelled overland to Italy, in the reverse direction to that taken by Haroun's famous elephant. From the east coast of Italy the journey was comparatively free from peril. Another possibility is that the ships hugged the northern coast of the Mediterranean as far as Greece, whence they could obtain unimpeded sea passage. All this is merely surmise. What there is evidence of, however, is the existence of ships owned by Jews.

As early as 581 there is a story of a miracle happening to a ship manned by Jews sailing the coast of South France and Italy,[2] and in a letter from Pope Gregory the Great to Fontinus of Palermo there is mention of a complaint made by the Jew, Nostamnus, about his ship.[3]

Gregory of Tours mentions the Jewish owner of a ship

[1] Cf. Ginzberg, *Geonica* II, p. 55, with its reference to "Lucca which is in the land of the Franks".
[2] Caro I, p. 61.
[3] Ibid.

sailing between Nice and Marseilles.[4] The Visigothic king, Egica forbade them to engage in maritime commerce,[5] and it is probable that with the cessation of the Visigoth persecution consequent upon the Moorish conquest they resumed their activity.

An anecdote told about Charlemagne points to the frequency of Jewish ships in his time. One day some ships were espied on the banks of the river, in sight of one of the ports of Narbonese Gaul. A discussion took place as to their nationality. Some expressed the opinion that they were the ships of Jewish merchants, but Charlemagne's keen eyes recognised them as those of Norman pirates.[6]

Most important is the evidence afforded by one of the charters of Louis the Pious to certain merchants in 828. Explicit mention is made in this of freedom for the ships of the Jews. None was to harm them or rob them of their ships even on the pretext that they were needed for the king's service. Interesting too is the provision that they had to report every year, *or every other year*, in the middle of May to give part of their profits to the palace.[7] Such a clause would not have been inserted unless the number of Jewish ships was considerable, and the words "every other year" surely point to the possibility of long voyages which rendered an annual appearance at court impracticable.

Nor is evidence lacking of Jewish ships at the other end of the long journey of the Radanites. Eldad Ha-Dani, whose account is probably much more authentic than has hitherto been supposed[8] begins with the words, "I and

[4] *De Gloria Martyrorum*, Chap. 97; cf. Heyd I, p. 126, *J.E.* IV, 188, and Graetz, Ger. 3rd ed., 5, 44.
[5] *Leg. Visig.* XII, 2, 18; *J.E.*, loc. cit.
[6] Heyd, Vol. I, p. 128, note 1; Caro I, 128.
[7] *Formulae Imperiales*, 52, 30, 31. *Regesten*, 81–3; cf. Caro I, 130. Shipper, p. 32. Katz, p. 87.
[8] See my article "Eldad Ha-Dani and China" in the *J.Q.R.*, XXXVI, pp. 231–8.

another Jew from the tribe of Asher entered a little ship for the purpose of trading with sailors."[9] Theophilus Simocatta says that in the time of the Sassanides, Persian Jews became very rich through sending merchant vessels through the Erythrean Sea to India.[10] Ishaq of Oman, "son of the Jew" came back from China in his own ship,[11] and at a slightly later date we have mention of Jewish shipowners at Tyre.[12]

This maritime activity on the part of the Jews has its natural reflection in the Geonic Responsa of the period. The unusually large number of Responsa dealing with the question of the permissibility of sailing on the Sabbath[13] shows how acute this question had become.

As late as the 13th century a rule is laid down, based on an actual incident, that a merchant whose ship was lost at sea could obtain a decree ordering any Jew who had acquired its contents directly or indirectly to return them to the owner.[14]

These references certainly point to the fact that in the Radanite period "Jews were sailors or at least proprietors of ships."[15]

[9] Halper, *Med. Heb. Texts*, p. 25.
[10] Ed. Bonn, p. 218. Cf. Heyd I, p. 8, note 4.
[11] See Chapter XIX.
[12] *J.E.* II, 35.
[13] Cf. Assaf, in *Madae Ha-Yahadut* I, pp. 52–55; Musafia, *Geonic Responsa*, para. 45, p. 17b; para 61, p. 18a.
[14] *Responsa* of Meir of Rothenburg, ed. Prague No. 770.
[15] Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, p. 67.

PART II

THE ROUTES OF THE RADANITES

CHAPTER XI

THE NAME RADANITES

VARIOUS suggestions have been made as to the origin and meaning of the name Radanites, but it cannot be said that any of them is convincing. Least tenable of all, though backed by the authority of a great scholar, is that of Harkavy,[1] that the word is a corruption of "Rabbanites", i.e., Jews who believed in the Rabbinic tradition as opposed to the sectarian Karaites who discarded that tradition. The change of "b" to "d" is in accordance with no rules of Semitic morphology, and true though it is that the Radanites were active at the very height of the Rabbinic-Karaite schism, the word Rabbanite is applied only to one of the parties in a theological controversy. It is inconceivable that, even if all these merchants belonged to the Rabbanites, they should be so called in reference to their trading activities, and by an Arab writer.

Most of the suggested derivations attempt to connect the name with the place of origin of these merchants. The Encyclopedia of Islam *en passant*, refers to them as "the Jewish merchants of Radhan"[2] which implies, without clearly stating, that there was a place of this name, for the existence of which, however, no evidence is given.

[1] Quoted by Shipper, p. 31.

[2] *Enc. Islam*, I, 842.

Another explanation (which may possibly coincide with the previous one) is that the name means "men of Rhaga". This is not without some plausibility. The province of Djibal, of which Ibn Khordadbeh was the Postmaster, was divided into four quarters, each of which had a great city as its chief town. These four cities were Kermanshah, Hamadan, Ispahan and Ray.[3] Ray, or Rhaga, near Teheran, the Rhages which was the birthplace of Tobit, the hero of the book of the apocrypha of that name, was in the 9th century the commercial metropolis of Persia, from which caravans went to Armenia, Khorasan and Khazaria,[4] and it is therefore argued that it was from this city that the Radanites started out, and from which they derived their name.[5] But Jacobs surely goes too far when he writes: "One of the languages with which they are credited is Persian, so that it would seem that their headquarters were in Persia. It has accordingly been determined that their headquarters were in the town of Rhaga (near Teheran) which was in the 9th century the commercial metropolis of Persia." Why "one of their languages with which they are credited" should give a clue to their origin in preference to "Arabic, Roman, the language of the Franks, Andalusians and Slavs" is not explained. Indeed the fact that without exception Ibn Khordadbeh makes all four journeys start from the land of the Franks points strongly to an Occidental origin,[6] and in the previous chapters it has been shown that the uniqueness of the Radanites consists just in this fact that they began their journeys in Christian Europe.[7]

[3] Le Strange, p. 186.
[4] Ritter, *Asien*, VI, 1, 195; cf. *J.E.* IV, 189.
[5] *J.E.*, loc. cit. Jacobs, pp. 196–197. See Appendix.
[6] Cf. Heyd, p. 77.
[7] Cf. Aronius, *Regesten*, 113.

It is this which makes so attractive the ingenious suggestion of D. Simonsen.[8] He also sees in the name a place-derivative, but instead of Rhages in Persia he suggests Rhodanus, the river Rhoné. Briefly his thesis is as follows: Beirut, in Syria, seems to have been at one time a kind of headquarters for traders from Arles. An inscription at Beirut dated A.D. 211–212 mentions one Julianus of Arles.[9] Arles was an important centre for products arriving from the Near and Far East. Since the *nautae Rodanici*, whose headquarters were at Lyons, did not own ships large enough to sail the sea, they may have carried the merchandise down the Rhone to Arles, whence it was shipped to the Orient. On the basis of several objects emanating from Tyre and Alexandria found at Lyons, the port of the *nautae Rodanici*, Simonsen suggests that the Radanites, whom Ibn Khordadbeh knew as Jewish merchants, were the *nautae Rodanici*, that is, the merchants and sailors from the country of the Rhone.

It is of course a well-known fact that the Jews in Lyons, Arles and Marseilles took an active part in the commerce with the Orient. The hypothesis therefore is tempting, but there are serious difficulties in the way of its acceptance. In the first place the activity of the Jews at Lyons and Marseilles belongs to the time when the Mediterranean was open to trade, before the Mohammedan conquest. After that, it dwindled into insignificance.[10] Secondly, the hypothesis depends upon 3rd century inscriptions. There is no evidence whatsoever that the sailors of the Rhone were called *nautae Rodanici* in the 9th century.[11]

[8] " Les Marchands juifs appelés Radanites ", *R.E.J.* LIV, 1907, pp. 141–142.
[9] A. Barot, " Les Naviculaires d'Arles à Beyrouth ", *Revue Archaeologique* V, 1905; pp. 262–273.
[10] See Chapter II.
[11] Cf. Katz, pp. 135–136. Shipper, p. 31, and Brutzkus, *Note*, p. 32, are wrong when they say that the name is found in 10th-century sources.

Most plausible, therefore, is the theory of de Goeje,[12] both simple and etymologically sound, that the word " Radanite " is nothing more nor less than the Persian " rah dan " meaning " knowing the way ", and therefore signifies merely " travellers ", " travelling merchants ". A suggestion on similar lines has been made to me by Rabbi J. Zlotnick, Director of Education to the South African Jewish Board of Education, that " Radanite " is derived from some original Aryan word cognate to the Italian and Spanish *rada*, and the English word *road*, Old English *rad*, a path. In this case the word would still have the same meaning as that given by De Goeje, though with an entirely different *provenance*. If any merchants merited this name of " roadmen, travellers ", it was surely the Radanites!

[12] *Bibl. Geog. Arab Glass*, p. 251. Cf. Jacobs, p. 196, note; Heyd, p. 77.

CHAPTER XII

THE FIRST ROUTE

"THEY take ship in the land of the Franks," says Ibn Khordadbeh, "on the Western Sea, and steer for Farama. There they load their goods on the backs of camels, and go by land to Kolzum in five days' journey, over a distance of twenty-five parasangs. They embark in the East Sea and sail from Kolzum to el-Jar and Jeddah; then they go to Sind, India, and China ... (they return) to Farama, where they again embark on the Western Sea. Some make sail for Constantinople to sell their goods to the Romans, others go to the palace of the King of the Franks to place their goods."

In general it will be seen that, with the sole difference that the construction of the Suez Canal has rendered possible a continuous sea route, obviating the necessity of the overland stage taken by the Radanites from Farama to Kolzum, this route is substantially the same as that taken to-day to the Far East, representing as it does the shortest and easiest route thither from Western Europe.

It is convenient to examine this route in four stages:

(1) The sea route across the Mediterranean to Farama.
(2) The overland stage across the neck of the isthmus of Suez from Farama to Kolzum.
(3) The sea voyage from Kolzum to India.
(4) The sea voyage from India to China.

1. *The sea route across the Mediterranean*

No indication is given of the port in Christian Europe

where these merchants embarked. It has already been pointed out[1] that to the Arabs "the land of the Franks" meant the whole of Christian Europe, including Italy, and it is possible either that they set sail in their own ships, hugging the northern littoral of the Mediterranean until they reached its eastern portion, either in Italy or in Greece, or else that they journeyed overland to Italy and there took ship. The wording of Ibn Khordadbeh, with its explicit mention of their loading their goods on camels and going overland for the second stage, would certainly imply that the first stage was entirely by sea. It is quite possible, however, that he was unaware that there had been an overland stage before they embarked on the ships which brought them to their first Mohammedan port.

One thing is certain, that there were no difficulties in the way of such a journey from France to Italy. The early medieval Jewish settlements often stuck closely to the old Roman trade routes which joined Rome to Gaul.[2] Naturally, therefore, we find them from an early date in Troyes, which was in constant and regular communication with Italy.[3] It stood at the convergence of many important highways, and the first references to the history of the Jews in France and in the Rhineland connect them with Italy. The regular journey from Troyes to Milan took five weeks.[4]

By whichever route they came, however, their ships anchored at Farama, where they unloaded for the second stage of their journey.

[1] See Chapter X.
[2] R. Anchel, "The early history of the Jewish Quarters in Paris" in *Jewish Social Studies* II (1940), pp. 45–60. Cf. Baron in "Rashi and the Jewish Community of Troyes" in the Rashi anniversary volume of the American Academy for Jewish Research, New York, 1941; p. 52.
[3] See Chapin, *Les villes des foires de Champagne des origines au debut du XIV siecle*, Paris, 1937; p. 233.
[4] Baron, op. cit., pp. 53–54.

2. *The overland route from Farama to Kolzum.*

The original and historic trade route connecting West and East was the Desert "ferry" of which the western terminus was at Tyre. Thence it proceeded to Damascus, across the Syrian Desert to Baghdad, continuing overland or by way of the Persian Gulf to the sea. The first great change in this original route came in the fourth pre-Christian century during the campaigns of Alexander the Great. Tyre was destroyed and simultaneously Alexandria was founded. A waterway led from the Nile to Koptos and thence to the Red Sea.[5] It is substantially this route, with the modifications which the passage of time had necessitated, which the Radanites took in the second stage of their first route to the Far East.

The two termini of this route, Farama and Kolzum, afford us a remarkable and striking example of the permanence of trade routes despite the changes in economic and geographical conditions. In ancient times the River Nile divided into three great branches a little below modern Cairo. Two of these branches, the Western branch discharging at Rosetta and the middle one discharging at Damietta, are still in existence and form the famous Delta.[6] The third, which is the one that concerns us, flowed in a north-easterly direction and discharged into the Mediterranean at modern Tineh, formerly Pelusium, of which Farama is the Arabic form.[7] During this period Pelusium was a strongly fortified city with a circumference, according to Strabo, of two and one-third miles. Its site is that of the Biblical Sin,[8] which Ezekiel[9] calls "the

[5] *Enc. Brit.*, 14th ed., Vol. 22, pp. 369–370.
[6] For most of these, and the following details, cf. Wilson, *The Suez Canal*, Oxford University Press, 1939; pp. 2–5.
[7] Pelusium is derived from *pelos* = mud. It is some twenty miles east of Port Said.
[8] Exodus, xvi, 1.
[9] Ezekiel, xxx, 15.

strength of Egypt", and which continued to be so until Roman times. Even to-day its ruins are extensive.

According to Diodorus,[10] Necho, son of Psammetichus, began the cutting of a canal from Pelusium to the Arabian Sea, the work being continued by Darius and completed by Ptolemy II. Diodorus does not mention the other terminus of the canal, but Strabo informs us that it was at Arsinoe, called Cleopatris. Arsinoe was built by Ptolemy Philadelphus about 250 B.C., and its ruins are adjacent to those of an eminence called to this day Kum-al-Kulzum, which is the site of the ancient Ptolemaic fortress, Clysma Praesidium, the Kolzum of the Arab geographers, including Ibn Khordadbeh. For all practical purposes Arsinoe, Kolzum and modern Suez are the same site.

Already in Roman times the Pelusiac branch of the Nile began to silt up[11] although Kolzum still retained its importance as the only port on the Red Sea where Indian ships could anchor, an importance which is reflected in the fact that the Red Sea is called by the Arab geographers Bahr-al-Kolzum, "the sea of Kolzum".[12]

Between the cutting of the first canal and the 8th century, various waterways were constructed which successively fell into decay. The last of all, a direct canal from Suez-Kolzum to the Nile at Cairo, the purpose of which was to facilitate the transport of foodstuffs to Arabian ports, was constructed by Amru ibn el-Asi, a lieutenant of the Caliph Omar, in 639. His successor, Caliph Abu Jafar Abdullah el Mansur, deliberately destroyed this canal in 767, in order to stop supplies reaching the rebels at Medina.[13] From that date until the construction of the Suez Canal, there was no waterway of any kind connecting the landlocked eastern

[10] 1st Century B.C.
[11] *Enc. Brit.*, 13th ed., Vol. 21, p. 77.
[12] *Enc. Islam* I, 581. *Enc. Brit.*, 13th ed., Vol. 26, p. 22.
[13] Heyd I, p. 40 cf.

extremity of the Mediterranean with the vast expanse of water leading from the Red Sea to the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Although the destruction of this canal dealt a severe blow to the entrepot trade of the terminal ports, their harbour facilities, which provided safe anchorage for fairly large ships, continued to give them a certain importance. Farama remained a port while "Kolzum retained some of the trade of Egypt with Arabia and countries further East after the canal was closed."[14] As late as the time of Selim I (1517) it was still a naval station; by the 17th century, however, it was in ruins,[15] and it remained so till it was resurrected in the 19th century as the modern Suez.

Such was the overland camel-caravan route of the Radanites from Farama to Kolzum. The ports were still invaluable to them, but the destruction of the canal nearly a century earlier necessitated an alternative method of transportation of goods between them, and the "ships of the desert" took the place of the ships of the sea. With that important difference the route was substantially the same as had been taken previously by countless merchants for a period lasting over one thousand years.

3. *The sea route from Kolzum to India*

This is equally true of the next stage of the route from Kolzum to the west coast of India.

Two great difficulties had to be overcome by these early sailors before this important route could become practicable. One was the peril of navigation in the Red Sea, the other the size of the Indian Ocean.[16]

[14] *Enc. Brit.*, 13th ed., Vol. 26, p. 22; cf. Masudi, p. 55, 9, quoted in *Enc. Islam* I, 840.
[15] Wilson, op. cit., p. 2, note.
[16] C. Day, *A History of Commerce*, First ed. 1907, London and New York; 1934 ed., pp. 85–86.

The solution of these difficulties which made this sea voyage possible is ascribed to an Egyptian captain named Hippalos, who, about the middle of the first Christian century,[17] made the important discovery that ships could sail from the Red Sea to India out of sight of land by taking advantage of the monsoons. The West monsoon[18] blew in July. It enabled ships to sail from Aden to the mouth of the Indus in forty days. Thence they proceeded by short stages to Ceylon. Between the end of December and the beginning of January they could return by the East monsoon. The return journey from Farama or Alexandria to India thus took some nine months.[19]

From this time regular sailings took place between India[20] and the Red Sea. From China and India "go ships of the Muslims who on their voyage thither and to Djiddah and al-Kolzum are attacked by pirates of the land of Sind," says Masudi,[21] referring to a period slightly after the Radanites when the sea voyage became unsafe. This part of the route is identical with that given by Suleyman for Chinese vessels.[22] Nor were the Radanites the last Jews to use it. At least three Jewish travellers took it in subsequent centuries. One was David, the brother of Maimonides, who, in 1161, lost his life in the Indian Ocean.[23] Benjamin of Tudela mentions it some years later,[24] and so does a 13th century merchant whose letter, found in the Genizah, is published by Adler.[25] In short, for over 1,000 years it was the normal route from Egypt to India and beyond.

The intermediate stages mentioned by Ibn Khordadbeh for this portion of the route are El-Jar,[26] Jeddah and Sind.

[17] Sykes, *History of Exploration*, p. 41. [18] Day (loc. cit.) says south-west.
[19] H. Schall, *Vom Tauschhandel zum Welthandel*, Leipzig, 1931; p. 149.
[20] And China, see next section. [21] *Enc. Islam* I, 840.
[22] Heyd I, p. 30. [23] See Chapter V. [24] *Itinerary*, p. 106.
[25] *Jewish Travellers*, p. 101. [26] *J.E.* IV, 189, has a misprint el-Tar.

El-Jar is on the Red Sea, and despite the great drawback of lack of drinking water, was of great importance as the port for Medina, from which it was only one night's journey. "It was a port of discharge for ships from Egypt, Abyssinia, Southern Arabia and China," though later it was displaced by Yanbu.[27]

Jeddah was chosen as the harbour for Mecca, the Holy City of Islam, by the Caliph Othman in 739. Through it Mecca was provided with supplies from Egypt, and it gradually become a centre of world commerce "where ships from Egypt met those from India and East Africa." [28]

It has already been mentioned[29] that Sind, the first port of call on the Indian mainland, was in our period Mohammedan, and subject to the Eastern Caliphate. It was invaded by sea from the mouth of the Indus by Mohammed ibn Kasim in 711, and remained for nearly three centuries under Mohammedan rule.[30] The sea route of the conqueror was probably identical with the middle portion of the Radanite second route.

4. *The sea route from India to China*

Once these traders had reached India they were on the normal trade routes between that country and China. What Eileen Power writes of later centuries in this connection is equally true of earlier ones: "Although all the travellers touched at an Indian port, all did not stay there. For they could now take ship on one of the Chinese junks which came to Quilon and Malabar. . . . Aboard one of these (Chinese junks) European travellers could sail on past Java and Sumatra and Indo-China to Cynkalon (Canton) or Zaiton." [31] The remarkable story of Ishaq "son of the

[27] *Enc. Islam* I, 1016 (s.v. Djar). [28] Ibid., p. 1041 (s.v. Djiddah).
[29] Chapter V. [30] *Enc. Brit.*, 13th ed., Vol. 25, pp. 142–143.
[31] "Routes to Cathay", in *Travel and Travellers*, p. 141.

Jew" of Oman supplies us with one link in that long journey. On his way from India to China he was arrested at Serbloza, in the island of Sumatra, the governor of which demanded from him the sum of 20,000 dinars for safe passage.[32] There is no reason for supposing that he took any other than the normal route, which must therefore have gone via Sumatra. In his story to the Governor of Sumatra, however, he mentions the transport of merchandise over the mountains on the backs of goats, suggesting an alternative overland route from India to China. This possibility will be discussed in the examination of the third route.

On their return journey some of these merchants, instead of going directly to France, sailed from Farama to Constantinople. The importance of Constantinople during this period is due to exactly the same causes as that of the Radanites, the blocking of the trade routes. "The greatness of Constantinople during the early Middle Ages was in part based on the continuance of the land traffic through the Balkan peninsula and Asia Minor. The Saracen and Moorish fleets had rendered the Mediterranean unsafe and piracy . . . had again become rife. The fact that at this time a single race, the Arabs, dominated the caravan tracks of the Near East and also the seaways of the Indian Ocean undoubtedly favoured the development of the trade with the Middle and Far East." [33] It was natural that the Radanites should seize the opportunities of trade thus presented. It is possible that from Constantinople, instead of returning home, they linked up with their fellow merchants in Khazaria, on the fourth route.

On none of the four routes was the assistance of Jewish

[32] E. Adler, "A Jewish Merchant in China at the beginning of the 9th century," in *Abhandlung Chajes*, pp. 1–5.
[33] *Enc. Brit.*, 14th ed., Vol. 22, p. 370.

communities *en route* less necessary than on this one. Apart from the twenty-five parasangs across the isthmus of Suez, the whole journey was done by sea. Farama, Kolzum, El-Jar and Jeddah were ports of call for the ships rather than stages for the merchants. Up to a short time ago it was generally believed that at the time of the Radanites there were no Jews in the whole Arabian peninsula or in Constantinople. The Jews were expelled from the Arabian peninsula by the Caliph Omar,[34] while the expulsion from Constantinople took place in 710.[35] Recent research, however, has thrown new light upon these events and strongly suggests that the expulsions were not nearly so complete as has been imagined.[36] According to Braslavsky,[37] the Jews of Khaibar in Central Arabia escaped the persecution of the Caliph al-Hakim by forging a privilege, which is still extant, on the basis of an authentic grant given by Mohammed. He maintains that when the Jews were expelled from Medina they went to Khaibar, and then could easily have returned when the persecution ended.

An incident related in the Ansab al-Ashraf of El-Baladari, who died *c.* 892,[38] strongly supports this view. Al Baladari relates that Chazma b. Caliph Abd-Allah b. Zubair, having been dismissed from his post as governor of Iraq for stealing some money, came to Medina, where he entrusted the money to a number of men, all of whom cheated him, except for one Jew.[39] The story may be apocryphal, but the casual mention by a 9th century Arab of a Jewish merchant in Medina is significant and tends to confirm Braslavsky's view. In addition, the Jews were never expelled from Wadi'l Kura, where in the

[34] *J.E.* VII, 481. [35] See Chapter VII.
[36] Recent tragic events in Europe suggest that they never are!
[37] "The Jewish Community of Khaibar" in *Zion* I, pp. 148–181 (Hebrew).
[38] For date see Braslavsky, p. 149, note 10. [39] Goitein, *Zion* I, p. 76.

10th century they even formed the majority.[40] The Geonic Responsa are full of communications to the Jews of Wadi'l Kura.[41]

So with Constantinople. It is true that Benjamin of Tudela, who visited Constantinople in the 12th century, says "No Jews live in the city," but it is obvious from what follows that the word "city" has to be understood in its most restricted sense, since he continues: "For they have been placed behind an inlet of the sea . . . they are unable to get out except by way of the sea when they want to do business."[42] In other words, they were in a ghetto. Moreover, we have explicit reference to Jewish students from Constantinople in Baghdad a century earlier. "And now the Greek students who are to be found among us from Constantinople have asked us."[43]

Aden is not mentioned by Ibn Khordadbeh, but as stated above, the ships taking advantage of the monsoon started from there, and "a Jewish community has been there from time immemorial."[44] Arabian maritime commerce was almost entirely concentrated there, whence it went to the Guzerata peninsula, the coast of Malabar, Indo-China and China."[45] The letter of the Jew of India who writes to a business correspondent in Cairo also mentions Aden as an intermediate port of call.[46]

The Jewish communities in Egypt, India and China have been dealt with in the relevant chapters. As has been pointed out, however, for the purposes of this route the existence of such communities was a factor of secondary importance.

[40] Braslavsky, p. 169. [41] Levin, *Ozar Ha-Geonim*, Index.
[42] Adler, *Itinerary*, p. 41.
[43] Harkavy, *Studien*, No. 235. Mann, *J.Q.R.* (H.S.) VII, 488. Levin, *Ozar Ha-Geonim*, II (Sabbath), p. 80.
[44] Adler, *Itinerary*, p. 67, note 1. [45] Heyd, I, p. 379.
[46] *Jewish Travellers*, pp. 100–101.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SECOND ROUTE

"SOMETIMES these Jew merchants prefer to carry their goods from the land of the Franks in the Western Sea, making for Antioch; thence they go by land to al-Jabia, where they arrive after three days' march. There they embark on the Euphrates for Baghdad, and then sail down the Tigris to al-Obolla. From al-Obolla they sail for Oman, Sind, Hind and China. All this is connected with one another."

At Sind this route coalesced with that of the first route, and this part of it has been discussed in the previous chapter. The earlier portion of the route has, however, to be examined.

As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, the trade route joining Syria and Babylon is the oldest in history. "The trade routes which now envelop the globe as with a net may be regarded as having grown from the track which at the dawn of recorded history connected Babylon with Egypt . . . the primitive way was no doubt north-westwards along the bank of the Euphrates, then south-westwards along the fertile foot of the Syrian mountains, but that way was early 'short-circuited' by a direct route across the Syrian desert. From this Mesopotamian-Syrian 'desert ferry' there extended ramifications to Europe and Asia by the extension of its two extremes." [1]

Thus Syria was the terminus of the caravan routes from

[1] *Enc. Brit.*, 14th ed., Vol. 22, pp. 369–370.

India, China and Arabia,[2] and it has been said with truth that "to-day we hardly realise that this (the Syrian) desert was the avenue of approach to the Far East, far shorter than the circuit round the Cape." [3]

The second Radanite route was the extension of this route in both directions. Instead, however, of employing the later and shorter desert route, the Radanites reverted to the original river route, reducing their land journey to one of three days from Antioch to al-Jabia on the Euphrates. In this manner they reached the famous river by the shortest possible way, and the reason for their doing so is not far to seek. Whatever advantages might lie in the shorter desert route were more than offset by the greater ease of transportation of goods which the use of river navigation afforded. It is interesting to note that in both the first and second routes they reduced the use of land transport to a minimum, of five days and three days respectively.

There is little to remark on the first portion of this route. The merchants obviously embarked in the same ports of Christian Europe as in the first route, but from Greece instead of making for the Egyptian coast at Farama, they continued in a north-easterly direction until they arrived at Antioch in Syria. Al-Jabia, their point of contact with the Euphrates, I have been unable to identify accurately. It has been suggested, probably on topographical grounds, that it is identical with al-Hanaya, on the bank of the Euphrates.[4]

[2] Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, p. 62.

[3] J. A. Montgomery in a review of "The Syrian Desert", *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) XXIX (1939), p. 317.

[4] Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, p. 2. *J.E.* IV, 189, makes the mistake of including al-Hanaya in Ibn Khordadbeh's account. Grant, *The Syrian Desert*, p. 66, without giving any source, says "they crossed the Euphrates at Birejik". Birejik is not mentioned among the different fords which are detailed on

There is also reference to a Jabar, a ruined fortress on the left bank of the Euphrates.[5]

Once arrived at the Euphrates they had but to sail down the river to Baghdad, and beyond it on the Tigris to its mouth on the Persian Gulf at al-Obolla. There was no need for them to stop at Baghdad, but there is little doubt that they did so, and for this reason it is specifically mentioned in Ibn Khordadbeh's account. It is unnecessary here to enlarge on the importance of Baghdad, the capital of the Eastern Caliphate. Suffice it to quote an Arabic tradition that it was a Christian sage who recommended it to Mansur as his new capital, emphasising its strategic importance, and adding, "In addition, processions will come to you by the Tigris, whether from Diar-Bakr, whether from the sea, *from India, China and Basra.* They will also arrive from Khorasan and the countries of Persia, by the river Tamara. . . . You will find yourself placed in the middle between Basra, Kufa, Wasit, Mosul and Sawad."[6]

Actually for Basra in this passage we should read al-Obolla, which later was swallowed up by Basra and became a suburb of it.[7] Al-Obolla, the ancient Apologos,[8] was a large town in the canal region of the Tigris delta, east of Basra, and on the tip of the Persian Gulf.[9] It was on the right bank of the Tigris, on the north of the canal Nahr-al-Obolla, the main waterway from Basra to Abadan and

pp. 41–42. He mentions there, however, that after the 16th century caravans en route for Baghdad crossed the Euphrates at Jubba, where there was a camel ford. Can we not identify al-Jabia with Jubba, and amend Grant's statement, that it was only used after the 16th century, accordingly? For details of this portion of the route cf. ibid., Chap. V.

[5] *Enc. Islam* I, 984–5.

[6] Al-Fakri, "Histoire des Dynasties Mussulmanes" by Ibn al-Tiqtaqa, *Archives Marocains*, Vol. XVI; Paris, 1910; p. 262.

[7] *Enc. Islam* I, 673.

[8] Le Strange, p. 47; cf. Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, p. 84.

[9] Heyd I, p. 29.

the sea. Before the foundation of Basra[10] it was the only port in the Tigris estuary. It is reported to have been captured in 633 by Utba b. Ghaziwan, who described it to the Caliph as "part of al-Bahrein, Oman, al-Hind and al-Sin (China)."[11] After the rise of Basra, it sank to secondary importance, but throughout the whole of the Abassid Caliphate it remained a large town[12] despite the fact that the climate was feverish.[13]

The apparently strange description of the town as "part of al-Bahrein, Oman, al-Hind and al-Sin" indicates the importance of the port as the emporium of the trade with India and China. The Chinese annals of the 7th and 8th centuries describe the course taken by junks from Canton to the Euphrates, which must be identical with that of the Radanite merchants. They went via Ceylon, Malabar, the Gulf of Cambay, and Diu, then for twenty days to the Straits of Hormuz, on to Siraf, and then to the Euphrates at al-Obolla.[14] Referring to these annals, Beazley[15] says: "Of special interest to us is the description in the Chinese annals of the sea voyages from Canton and their other harbours to the Persian Gulf . . . From the fifth to the ninth centuries the ships of China . . . might often be seen moored in the mouth of the Euphrates." Needless to add, the same applies to ships from India.

Extremely interesting is a fragment of a Responsum which has been discovered and published, proving the existence of a small Jewish community in al-Obolla in the time of R. Moses Gaon, to whom it was addressed, and

[10] See next chapter.

[11] Al-Baladhuri, p. 341.

[12] *Enc. Islam* III, 969.

[13] Yule, p. 84.

[14] Sykes, *History of Exploration*, p. 31.

[15] *Dawn of Modern Geography* I, p. 478.

dated *circ.* 832, thus being practically contemporaneous with the Radanites.[16]

Between al-Obolla and Sind, Ibn Khordadbeh mentions Oman as a stage in the journey. Oman is on the south-east coast of Arabia with its harbour at Muscat, and together with Hasa occupies the eastern coast of Arabia to the head of the Persian Gulf.[17] Al-Mukadassi[18] compares it with Aden and Egypt for its importance in the world's trade, and calls it and Soraf, which is not mentioned by Ibn Khordadbeh, "the forecourt of China".[19] The merchants of Oman were regarded as dishonest, wicked and deceitful.[20]

From Oman came the Jewish merchant "Ishaq, son of the Jew", who made a remarkable journey to China in the 10th century.[21]

Thus, like the first route, the second followed the well-defined trade routes of the time once it reached Mahommedan territory, and at every stage the existence of Jewish communities can be assumed.

[16] *Geonica* II, p. 212.
[17] *Enc. Brit.*, 13th ed., Vol. 19, pp. 99–100.
[18] Page 35.
[19] Page 426.
[20] *Enc. Islam* III, 976.
[21] *Abhandlung zur Erinnerung an H.P. Chajes*; Vienna, 1933; pp. 1–5. *V. infra*, Chapter XIX.

CHAPTER XIV

THE THIRD ROUTE

"THESE different journeys can also be made by land. The merchants that start from Spain or France go to Sous-al Akza, and then to Tangiers, whence they march to Kairouan and the capital of Egypt. Thence they go to al-Ramla, visit Damascus, al-Kufa, Baghdad and Basra, cross Ahwaz, Fars, Kirman, Sind, Hind, and arrive at China."

From the Jewish point of view the third route is the most interesting of all, since it might well be named "the Jewish route". It might seem almost to have been deliberately designed to pass as many centres of Judaism as possible, as will be shown. But that is not the only point of especial interest in this route. In the first place, as mentioned explicitly by Ibn Khordadbeh, this route and the fourth are as essentially land routes as the first two are essentially sea routes. There is a general consensus of opinion that these land routes, certainly as far as the eastern half of the journey is concerned, were avoided as much as possible by Arab merchants on account of the greater facilities of sea travel, and the manifold dangers which beset travellers by land. Thus Beazley writes,[1] "By comparison (with the sea routes) the overland routes were unimportant, at least in reference to the value of the traffic that passed over them. Even from Samarkand, Balkh or Bokhara men usually preferred the ocean way to China, rather than face the terrors of mountain and desert along the caravan track";

[1] *Dawn of Modern Geography* I, p. 401.

and it appears that Ibn Khordadbeh himself refers only to Jewish merchants in his description of the land routes. The very fact that he goes into much more detail in describing the roads from Transoxania than in his brief description of the sea route in itself suggests that they were less well known.[2]

It is natural to suppose that it was the prospect of large profits which chiefly induced the Radanites to follow a route notorious for its hazards and dangers. This surmise is borne out by the statement of Beazley that there was a land route to China through Tibet, but it was extremely difficult and used almost exclusively for the musk trade.[3] As will be shown later, it is reasonable to suppose that when Ibn Khordadbeh says "these different journeys can also be made by land," he includes this stretch through Tibet to China, since musk, which, according to Beazley, could be obtained only from Tibet,[4] is one of the commodities of the Radanites expressly mentioned.

The words "the merchants that start from France or Spain" seem to indicate the important fact that not all the Radanite merchants made the whole journey from one extremity of the route to the other. Not only do they show that some of the merchants on this route started their journey from Spain, but it is surely legitimate to infer from them that some started neither from France nor from Spain, but joined their fellow-travellers at intermediate points on the long road, especially since from Baghdad to Transoxania this route followed the most famous of all the roads which stretched across the Eastern Caliphate, the famous Khorasan road.

In striking contrast to the first two routes, which showed

[2] *Enc. Islam* I, 842.
[3] Loc. cit., Note.
[4] Cf. Benjamin of Tudela, *Itinerary*, pp. 75 and 82.

a strong predilection for the sea, this route reduced sea travel to the absolute minimum. With this end in view the merchants, either crossing from France into Spain, or starting from Spain, proceeded to the south of Spain and crossed over to the North African mainland. They did not cross at the very narrowest point, i.e. from Gibraltar to Tangier, probably on account of the conditions of travel prevailing at the time, but went from some part in the south of Spain to Morocco, and then proceeded by land to Tangier. The Sous-al-Akza ("Further Sous") mentioned by Ibn Khordadbeh is a district in the south of Morocco, and was so called in contrast with al-Sous al-Adna ("Hither Sous"), which was the whole of northern Morocco with Tangier as the capital.[5]

They continued on their journey along the historic caravan route which traversed the whole length of the North African littoral to Cairo, halting at the important town of Kairouan. Kairouan, founded by Ukba b. Nafi in 670,[6] rapidly rose to a position of outstanding importance as a result of the commercial conditions of the time. It became the principal caravan station on the route from Spain to Damascus and Baghdad,[7] the route which was followed by the Radanites.

When they arrived at Cairo, instead of crossing the isthmus of Suez as did their fellows in the first route, they turned north and continued their long land trek right across

[5] *Enc. Islam* IV, pp. 568 and 650–651. It is to be noted that Ibn Khordadbeh sometimes gives the towns, sometimes the provinces and sometimes merely the country traversed. Thus in this route alone, Spain and France are countries, Sous-al-Akza a province of Maghreb, Tangier a city, "the capital of Egypt", Ramleh, Damascus, Baghdad and Basra cities, Ahwaz, Fars, Kirman and Sind provinces, India and China countries. The cities mentioned are usually capitals (Tangier, "the capital of Egypt", Ramleh, Damascus and Baghdad), while the others are places of great importance on the caravan routes.
[6] Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 1931, p. 319. Cf. *J.E.* VII, 414, and Chapter II.
[7] Cf. *J.E.* VII, 416.

the Sinai Desert to Palestine. In 878 Ahmad ibn Tulun of Egypt occupied Syria and from this time Palestine became a dependency of Egypt.[8] The date is rather late for the Radanites, but it is of little moment whether the country was under Syrian or Egyptian rule at the time. It may appear strange that in speaking of Jewish merchants Jerusalem is not mentioned in preference or addition to al-Ramla, but Ibn Khordadbeh was an Arab. Where he mentions towns they are usually capitals,[9] and from 638–9, i.e. under the Ommayads, al-Ramla took the place of Jerusalem as the capital.[10] It is not to be doubted that these merchants took the opportunity of visiting the Holy City.

Still proceeding northwards they reached Damascus, which, after its capture by the Mohammedans in 635, and under the rule of the Ommayads, had entered on a new period of splendour and prosperity.[11] The next portion of the route took them to Kufa. Still faithful to their land routes, they eschewed river navigation down the Euphrates, on which Kufa stood,[12] and probably cut across the Syrian desert by the "short circuit" mentioned in the previous chapter. Kufa, 88 miles south of Baghdad, stood at that time on an affluent of the Euphrates,[13] although at the present day it is at a long distance from the actual channel of the river.[14] Founded in 638–9 by Omar, on the ruins of Ctesiphon,[15] it was also a port in which the "ships of India and China were constantly to be seen moored before the houses of the town."[16] In 749 it became the capital of the Abbasids and remained so for nearly two centuries.[17]

[8] Mann, *Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fatimids*, p. 16.
[9] See note 5.
[10] *Enc. Islam* III, p. 1116.
[11] *J.E.* IV, 416.
[12] See *infra*, p. 137.
[13] *J.E.* VII, 580.
[14] Yule, p. 84. Sykes, *History of Persia* I, p. 498.
[15] *J.E.*, loc. cit.
[16] Yule, p. 84.
[17] *Enc. Islam* II, p. 1106.

At Kufa the Indian and Chinese ships were moored, and the Radanites were on their way to India and China. Further down the river they came to al-Obolla, where again the Indian and Chinese ships invitingly beckoned.[18] Yet the Radanites almost literally turned their backs on these inviting prospects, and proceeded to the neighbouring town of Basra. But Basra was also a centre of maritime trade, and as far as the sea-trade with India and China was concerned, it was indistinguishable from al-Obolla.[19] The reason why Ibn Khordadbeh mentions al-Obolla in the second route of the Radanites, which was by sea, and the adjacent Basra in the third route, becomes clear when we keep in mind this essential fact, that he is here describing a land route. And Basra, while it shared with the neighbouring al-Obolla the sea trade, had an added and individual importance in the fact that from it the great Khorasan Road continued eastwards to the borders of China. It is to this fact more than to its maritime trade that its importance in the 9th century is ascribed.[20]

Basra was founded by Utba b. Ghaziwan at the order of Omar in the same year as Kufa, 639. It grew with astonishing rapidity, being next in importance to Baghdad as a commercial centre.[21] Its foundation was partly due to the fact that the climate of al-Obolla was so damp and the insect pests so intolerable that a new site was sought and a new town established ten miles to the north-west of the present city of that name.[22]

The Khorasan Road, already mentioned, was the greatest of all the caravan routes which stretched across

[18] See preceding chapter.
[19] *Enc. Islam* I, p. 673.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Mann, *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) VII, 461 and 470. *Enc. Islam*, loc. cit.
[22] Sykes, *History of Persia* I, p. 498.

the Eastern Caliphate. It actually consisted of two routes, one from Baghdad, which, as will be seen in the next chapter, is substantially that taken in this portion of the last Radanite route, and a second which went down the Tigris, by land or by sea to Basra, then to Ahwaz in Khuzistan, and then to Shiraz in Fars. From Fars there were a number of branch roads, one of which went to Sirjan and Kirman "eastward by more than one route" across the Great Desert.[23] After arriving at Samarkand, it crossed the Jaxartes, from which it continued to the frontiers of China at Khotan.[24] A minute description of this road is given by ibn Rustah.[25]

It is plain from these remarks that for "Baghdad, Basra, Ahwaz, Fars, Kirman, Sind, Hind and China" in Ibn Khordadbeh's account one could substitute simply "From Baghdad they go by the Khorasan road to Khotan and thence on to China". Ahwaz, Fars and Kirman are the three provinces, from west to east, which stretch east of the province of Iraq. The name Ahwaz, however, may refer to the capital of the province, not the province itself, the province being Khuzistan. Khuzistan means "the land of the people of Khuz". Ahwaz is the Arabic plural of the word Khuz, and may be therefore either another name for Khuzistan, or short for Suk-al-Ahwaz, which was the capital.[26] Khuzistan corresponds roughly with the Elam of the Old Testament, and the capital Suk-al-Ahwaz is the Hormuzd-Ardeshir of the Talmud. It was an emporium of commerce in Arab times.[27]

Further east was Fars, the capital of which was Shiraz.[28]

[23] Le Strange, p. 10–11.
[24] Ibid., p. 488.
[25] Ibid., p. 12.
[26] Cf. Le Strange, p. 232.
[27] *Enc. Islam* I, 208.
[28] Ibid., II, 70.

It was the central province, and was known to the Greeks as Persis; in error they applied this name to the whole country, hence the name Persia.[29] The next easterly province was Kirman, adjacent to Khorasan,[30] which is on the border of China. On the north and east it is bordered by the Great Desert,[31] and its importance for traffic lay in the fact that it was on the great roads leading to India and China.[32]

It is obvious from all that has been said that the continuation of this route to India and China was also by land, but a consideration of this point will be deferred to the next chapter when the fourth and last route will be considered, since the same arguments apply to both.

We have now to consider the important question of the Jewish communities on the various points of this route during the period of the Radanites.

Of Morocco there is little detailed information, though it has had a Jewish community from time immemorial.

A monograph, if not a whole volume, could be written on the importance of the Jewish community of Kairouan from the 8th to the middle of the 11th centuries.[33] We have a host of responsa sent to the scholars of this town from Babylon[34]; the earliest are from the time of Jehudai Gaon (760–764) and his disciple Hanina,[35] and his successors Moses Gaon in 832, Cohen Zedek in 845, Sar Shalom in 849 and Natronai in 853 actively carried on this corre-

[29] Le Strange, p. 248.
[30] *Enc. Islam* II, 1030.
[31] Le Strange, p. 299.
[32] *Enc. Islam* II, 1030.
[33] Cf. Margolis and Marx, *History of the Jews*, pp. 277–283. Levin, *Jubilee Volume in honour of Rabbi M. A. Amiel*, Jerusalem, 1943, pp. 205–210. Poznanski in *Men of Kairouan* (Hebrew), Warsaw, 1909, gives a full account of the Jewish scholars of Kairouan from the beginning of the 9th to the middle of the 11th century, when the community was dispersed.
[34] The index to Levin's *Ozar Ha-Geonim* is sufficient indication of this.
[35] Mann, *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) VII, p. 482.

spondence.[36] So great was its volume that Kairouan has rightly been called "the nodal point of halakic communication between Sura and Pumbedita[37] and the Mediterranean".[38] It was also an important intermediary point in the transmission of money from Spain to those academies.[39] When Ukba the Exilarch of Babylon was banished, he sought refuge there in the year 920.[40] This intercourse continued up to the time of Samuel b. Hofni, the last Gaon of Sura.[41] Kairouan stood in similar contact with Spain on the west[42]; Samuel ibn Nagrela of Granada in the 11th century used his influence on its behalf.[43] Eldad Ha-Dani, who arrived there in 880,[44] went on from there to Spain. Thus the important Jewish community there in the time of the Radanites was, like them, in contact with both Spain and Baghdad.

What is still more interesting is that there is evidence of contact between Kairouan and Christian Italy, as it is now generally accepted that Hushiel b. Elhanan, the famous scholar of Kairouan, arrived there from Italy at the end of the 10th century.[45]

Another most interesting fact in connection with the trading activities of the Radanites, and a further proof of the commercial importance of Kairouan, is that letters and credentials were given by the merchants of Kairouan

[36] Ibid., p. 483. For the last-named cf. Shaare Zedek, p. 84a, 3.
[37] See *infra*, p. 136.
[38] Ginzberg, *Geonica* I, p. 51, note 2.
[39] *J.E.* VII, p. 414.
[40] Ibid., p. 415.
[41] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) XVII, p. 402.
[42] Cf. *Responsa*, R. Asher, VI, 15.
[43] *Seder Ha-Dorot*, ed. Warsaw I, 191.
[44] See chapter XIX. Levin, *Jubilee Volume to Rabbi M. A. Amiel*, pp. 207–208, attributes the first contact between Kairouan and Babylon to the visit of Eldad and the consequent correspondence with Zemah b. Haim, Gaon of Sura. It has, however, been noted above that the correspondence has been traced back to a century earlier.
[45] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) XI, 643; cf. *J.E.* VII, 416.

to their business representatives in distant parts, in accordance with what is called "a custom existing from the most ancient times", empowering them to collect money from their debtors.[46]

Reference has already been made to the Jewish community of Cairo.[47]

Of the Jews of Palestine very little is known during the Geonic period.[48] Palestine shared in the general improvement of conditions consequent upon the Arab conquest.[49] R. Aha, the author of the Sheeltot, lived there in 760, and as his work consists of actual sermons and halakic decisions given by him, it proves the existence of a community there in the 8th century.[50]

The growth of Babylonian influence there, due to the opening up of these communications of which the Radanites took advantage, is seen in the establishment of Babylonian Jewish communities with their own Synagogues and customs side by side with the native Palestinian ones, and mention is made about 760 of those cities in Palestine which have Babylonian communities and those which have not.[51]

Of the communities which had a Babylonian congregation Ramla was one.[52] There was a Jewish community there about 998,[53] and in a document dated seventeen years later, dealing with a case which came before the Jewish Court of that place, the husband is called "of Damascus", the next stage of the Radanites.[54]

[46] *J.E.* VII, 416.
[47] See Chapter III.
[48] Ibid. See Graetz, German edition, Vol. V, Chap. 4, pp. 17–32.
[49] Ginzberg, *Geonica* II, pp. 50–51.
[50] Graetz, op. cit., pp. 179–180
[51] Ginzberg, *Geonica* II, p. 52.
[52] Baron, *S.R.H.* III, 80. *Hebrew Union College Annual*, Vol. II, pp. 271 ff.
[53] Mann, *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) IX, pp. 151–152.
[54] Levin, *Ozar Ha-Geonim*, Vol. IX (Kiddushin), p. 66.

The Jewish community of Damascus which existed there in pre-Mohammedan times certainly continued and prospered after the Arab conquest, though the first historic reference to it in this period dates from 970.[55] Here too the Babylonian influence is seen in the existence of a Babylonian Jewish community side by side with the native one.[56]

From Baghdad to Kufa the Radanite travellers were in the most thickly populated Jewish territory in the world, the area which for nearly 1,500 years had been Jewish Babylon, where the Babylonian Talmud was compiled.[57] In the 10th century Mukadassi makes explicit reference to the large number of Jews in Kasr ibn Kubarrah, the largest town between Baghdad and Kufa,[58] and although Ibn Khordadbeh does not mention it, in this stage of their route the Radanites passed through, or in the very near vicinity of, both Sura and Pumbedita, which for 600 years had been the twin centres of learning, the "Oxford and Cambridge" of world Jewry, the colleges of the Geonim who have been so frequently mentioned in the course of this work. Sura, between Baghdad and Kufa, was the site of the famous bridge of boats[59] across which the travellers passed, and twenty-seven miles south of it, and twenty-eight miles north of Kufa, was Kantarah al-Kufa, otherwise called al-Kanatar, "the Bridges", which carried the high road across the Badat canal. Le Strange, who gives this interesting information, states: "It probably lay adjacent to, or possibly was identical with, the Hebrew Pombedita (Arab Fum-al-Badat, 'the mouth of the Badat canal')" and, apparently in ignorance of the dominant role played by

[55] *J.E.* IV, 416.
[56] *S.R.H.* III, 80.
[57] See Chapter III.
[58] Le Strange, p. 71.
[59] Ibid., p. 73.

this town in Jewish history for the previous nine centuries, he adds that it is "mentioned by Benjamin of Tudela in the 12th century as a great centre of Jewish learning in Babylon"![60]

The history of the Jewish community of Kufa is also not without interest. An important Jewish community existed there from the time of the Caliph Ali, with whom the Jews sided in his struggle against Mu'awiya in the 7th century, and Benjamin of Tudela in the 12th century found seven thousand Jews there.[61] Graetz states that the Jews of Kufa hailed from Khaibar in Arabia, and settled there when they were expelled from Khaibar by the Caliph Omar.[62] This statement has been repeated by all subsequent Jewish historians. Recently, however, it has been shown by J. Braslavsky[63] that Graetz relied upon a statement by Weil,[64] who read the passage wrongly. The Jews of Khaibar were actually settled in Palestine, not in Kufa, and it was the Jews of Nedjran who were settled in Kufa.

The next stage in the journey was Basra. As early as 680 a Jew of Basra, Masurjuwaik, translated a medical work from Syriac into Arabic,[65] and responsa of 823 and 874–82 prove the existence of a Jewish community there in the 9th century.[66] The size of this community may be judged from the fact that it contributed no less than one-fifth of the total income of the academy of Sura, under whose spiritual jurisdiction it came, 300 dinars out of a total of 1,500.[67]

[60] Ibid., p. 74.
[61] *J.E.* VII, 580.
[62] Graetz, Vol. V, p. 119.
[63] *Zion* (Hebrew) I, p. 171, note, and *Mizrach U'Ma'arav* III, p. 418.
[64] *Geschichte der Chalifen*, Mannheim, 1846, p. 56.
[65] Baron, *S.R.H.* I, p. 356.
[66] *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) VII, pp. 461 and 470. Cf. also *Ozar Ha-Geonim* II (Shabbat), pp. 82 and 162, and VIII, p. 149, to Nahshon Gaon; cf. also *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) XVII, pp. 407 ff.
[67] Baron, *S.R.H.* III, 79.

The Jewish communities along the Khorasan road which started from Basra have already been discussed, as also those of India and China.[68]

There is no doubt, therefore, that on this route above all others the Radanites came into contact, at every stage of their journey, with large and flourishing Jewish communities, the largest and most important in the world at that time.

[68] Chapters IV, V and VI. For the Jewish community of Fars see Mann, *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) VII, p. 471. Khuzistan, as has been mentioned, is the Biblical Elam. Elam is often mentioned in the Geonic literature, alongside of Babylon, as the seat of Jewish communities.

CHAPTER XV

THE FOURTH ROUTE

"SOMETIMES they likewise take the route behind Rome, and, passing through the country of the Slavs, arrive at Khamlif, the capital of the Khazars. They embark on the Jorjan Sea, arrive at Balkh, betake themselves from there across the Oxus, and continue their journey toward the Yourts of the Toghozghor, and from there to China."

The greater ease of communications in the Mohammedan world in the 9th century, as compared with the Christian world, was no doubt responsible for the fact that in all the first three routes the Radanites took the earliest opportunity of leaving Christian and entering Islamic territory. The Mediterranean during their period was a Mohammedan lake; and whether they made for the nearest point in North Africa, as in the third route, or sailed for Farama or even for more distant Antioch as in the first and second routes, they can be regarded as coming within the sphere of Mohammedan influence as soon as they embarked on their ships.

In this respect the fourth and last route contrasted strongly with the others. Instead of making for Islamic territory at the nearest point, they reached it at the furthest possible eastern point, at the Caspian Sea,[1] after having traversed the whole of Europe and Khazaria.

There must have been some special reason for the choice of this difficult and hazardous route. It is true that from the time of Charlemagne roads and communications had been

[1] The Jorjan Sea. See *infra*, p. 145.

improved and extended to the eastern borders of the Franco-German Empire, to the Elbe and the Oder,[2] and that even before Charlemagne there was, towards the end of the 8th century, a very good commercial route from Thuringia to Mayence used by the Slavs.[3] But that part of the route which lay in the heathen and yet unpacified territory of Slavonia and the Balkan countries was beset with terrible dangers, which the Radanites would hardly have braved without some particular inducement.

It is possible that the great attraction was the then Jewish kingdom of the Khazars with its great trading possibilities. It is significant that when, *circ.* 960, the powerful Chasdai ibn Shaprut, Minister to the Caliph of Cordova, who had all the diplomatic and other resources of his royal master at his disposal, wished to establish contact with the king of Khazaria, it was ultimately by this route that he did so, after two unsuccessful attempts by other routes. On the first occasion, Isaac b. Nathan promised to take the letter via Constantinople, but on his arrival there the king of Constantinople sent him back, since there was warfare in the countries through which he would have to pass, and the sea[4] was stormy and not always navigable. Chasdai then formed the plan of sending the letter via Jerusalem, Nisibis, Armenia, and Berdaa[5] to Khazaria. This also, however, proved impracticable. At last an embassy came from the King of the Gebalim,[6] which

[2] See Chapter I.

[3] Vita Sturmi (died 779), ed. Pertz, 88, II, 369; cf. Heyd I, p. 78.

[4] The Black Sea.

[5] Berdaa, afterwards called Derbend, was the principal town of Arran in Western Armenia on the road to Bab-el-Ahwab. The road from Bab-el-Ahwab over Semender leads to Itil, the capital of the Khazars after Khamlif. (See chapter VII.) *J.E.*, art. Caucasus. Neubauer (*J.Q.R.* I, 24) calls it a city of the Khazars. From Cordova to Jerusalem was, of course, part of the third Radanite Route, while from there to Constantinople was included in the return journey of the first.

[6] King Boleslav I of Bohemia, *J.E.* IV, p. 3; or King Hunu of Slavonia, Mann, p. 18.

included two Jews, Saul and Joseph; these promised to take it to the king "who for your sake will send it to the Israelites dwelling in the land of the Hungarians; they will send it to Russ,[7] thence to Bulgar, till at last it will arrive."[8] It was thus that the letter did in fact arrive. That a reply was sent by the same route seems to be proved by a tantalisingly incomplete fragment which has recently been discovered, and which sheds new light both on the two Jewish members of the embassy, and on the return journey by the little known route from the "Land of the Franks, behind Rome, to the country of the Slavs." Chasdai b. Shaprut had an agent in South Italy called Samuel. In the fragment referred to, the spokesmen of a community in South France report the arrival in their country of three persons, Saul, Joseph and Judah, who had told them of the great position held by a certain dignitary, and of the influence he could wield on their behalf. The fragment also records the arrival of an agent of Samuel, who asked what his master could do for them, and whom they besought to intercede for the removal of a tax of 30 pounds of wax which they had to pay annually to the Church. The coincidence of the names of Saul, Joseph and Samuel can hardly be accidental, and Mann gives cogent reasons for the assumption that the dignitary referred to is Chasdai b. Shaprut, and that the Saul and Joseph who spoke of his great position and influence were none other than the Saul and Joseph of the embassy who had seen his greatness when they were in Cordova. If this is correct—and his arguments seem perfectly sound—the embassy travelled by land via North Italy ("behind Rome"), South Spain and Cordova, instead of by sea from an Adriatic port. Mann suggests that it may

[7] Roumania.

[8] E. Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, pp. 28–29.

first have visited Germany and France before Spain, as it certainly did on the return journey.[9]

To revert to the route taken by Chasdai's letter. It will be seen that there were three possible routes from Spain to Khazaria. Chasdai, living in Spain, was probably completely unaware of the one going through wholly non-Islamic territory, but he did know the two Mohammedan routes taken by the Radanites in their first and third journeys respectively. Neither of these routes led to Khazaria, but one of them led to Constantinople and the other to Jerusalem-Syria, and it was from these nearest points that he tried to reach this unknown country. We have already seen[10] that there was intercourse between Khazaria and both Constantinople and Jerusalem, and we have cited the evidence of an actual letter from Chasdai to the king of Constantinople in which he pleaded for favourable treatment of the Jews of that country.[11] It is obvious too that the king of Constantinople could have forwarded the letter had conditions been favourable, but they were not. One unfavourable circumstance, the state of war which existed at the time of the letter, was a transient and temporary one, but the other, the dangerous sailing conditions, was constant, and this precluded a regular route from Constantinople to Khazaria. We are not told why the second attempt failed, but it was obviously for the same reason.

It was only when the European Jews came to Cordova that he was informed of the trade route across Germany and Slavonia, of which he thereupon took advantage.

As a matter of fact, although we have no evidence, apart from the Radanites and the embassy of Saul and Joseph,

[9] J. Mann, *Texts and Studies*; Cincinnati, 1931; pp. 16–19.
[10] Chapter VII. [11] Ibid.

of this route being used by Jews in the 9th and 10th century, there is ample evidence of its fairly frequent use in the 11th and 12th. Responsa dealing with the conveyance of goods from Germany to Hungary[12] which were ascribed by Caro to Meir of Rothenburg in the 13th century[13] have been shown by Zimmels to be by Judah Ha-Cohen of Mayence in the 11th, and are actually to be found in his Sefer Ha-Dinim, "Book of Laws".[14] The Jewish traveller Petahia of Ratisbon at the end of the 12th century travelled from Ratisbon to Prague, and from there commenced his famous journey which brought him to the land of the Khazars by exactly the same route as the fourth of the Radanites.[15] A few years later Isaac Or Zarua journeyed from Prague to Ratisbon, then on to Paris, Provence, Worms, Speyer and Wurzburg. His work *Or Zarua*, by which he is commonly designated, contains part of his halakic correspondence with the scholars of Italy, France and Austria,[16] thus testifying to a lively and regular intercourse between the Jews of these countries. All this takes us beyond the period of the Radanites, but is admissible evidence of regular routes between France and Prague, and Prague and Khazaria. And Prague, as will be seen, is of decisive importance in this fourth Route.

While this reason no doubt played its part in the choice of this difficult route, there was another much weightier beside which it paled into insignificance. One of the most important "commodities" of the Radanites was slaves, and this route is pre-eminently the slave route, the only one

[12] *Responsa of Meir of Rothenburg*, ed. Prague, Notes 904 and 935. See especially J. Brutzkus, "Trade with Eastern Europe, 800–1200" in *Economic History Review*, XIII, pp. 31–41.
[13] II, 167.
[14] Cf. Zunz, *Synagogale Poesie*, p. 611.
[15] *Travels of Petahia*, ed. Benisch.
[16] *J.E.* VI, 627.

of the four on which the Radanites could obtain the human merchandise in which they traded. This unpleasant trade will be dealt with more fully in a subsequent chapter,[17] where it will be shown that the only place where Jewish merchants could purchase slaves was in the still pagan countries of Slavonia, whence indeed the very word "slave" is derived.

Of this trade Prague was the centre. It is the first Bohemian city in which Jews are known to have settled,[18] and Ibrahim ibn Yakub, a Spanish Jew who visited it in 965, gives us important information not only on this trade, but on the routes from Prague to Khazaria.[19] He wrote on the lands of Poland, Russia, Turkey and Khazaria, and received his information from Jewish travellers and merchants visiting the city from the east. According to him they came from Khazaria, Hungary and Slovakia, and from Cracow, which was eight days'[20] journey from Prague. They brought spices to Prague, and purchased there slaves, tin and wheat, of which he carefully notes the prevalent prices.[21] There can therefore be no doubt but that this trade was the main reason for the choice of this route.

We turn now to a consideration of the Route itself. Ibn Khordadbeh, an Arab, is not too well informed about the routes of Christian and pagan Europe. His statements on this part of the route are vague, and not a single city is mentioned until Khazaria is reached. The whole of this part of the route is dismissed in the words "they take the route behind Rome, and pass through the country of the

[17] See Chapter XVIII. [18] *J.E.* X, 153.
[19] See Chapter IX, note 29, and Chapter XIX. Shipper (Yiddish, p. 36; Hebrew, p. 30) says that the merchants whom Ibrahim ibn Yakub saw in Prague were Radanites, but reasons will be given in Chapter XIX for the belief that the activity of the Radanites had come to an end by that date.
[20] In his *Economic History*, p. 30, Shipper says eight *weeks*.
[21] Shipper: Yiddish, p. 36; Hebrew, p. 30.

Slavs". The route behind Rome either means North Italy, between which and France there were well-defined routes,[22] or else southern Germany. "The country of the Slavs", Slavonia, was then of much greater extent than the present-day Slovakia,[23] and Ibn Khordadbeh obviously applies it to the whole of the Balkan territory.

After traversing Slavonia the Radanites reached the then Jewish kingdom of the Khazars. A chapter[24] has already been devoted to this country, and it is necessary only to point out that in the ninth century Khamlif, or as it is variously spelt, Khamlidj or Khalendsch, was the capital, as Ibn Khordadbeh states, later giving way to Itil, the modern Astrakhan.[25] Here, as has been stated in the chapter on Khazaria, they probably picked up the furs which constituted one of their commodities, and possibly the swords, and they were now in a position to trade these products of the West for the spices of the East.

They traversed Khazaria to its border on "the sea of Jorjan", which they crossed. The name Jorjan, variously spelt Gurgon,[26] Jurjan,[27] and Djurdjan[28] is given to a province, a river and a sea. The province is the ancient Hyrcania[29] in the south-east corner of the Caspian Sea,[30] and the river of that name is the river which flows through it.[31] The sea mentioned by Ibn Khordadbeh is the Caspian Sea, also called from its proximity to Khazaria, "Bahr-al-Khazar".[32]

[22] See Chapter XII.
[23] *Ibn Haukal* (ed. Auseley), p. 10. See also D'Ohhson, *Des peuples du Caucase*, pp. 85 and 237.
[24] Chapter VII. [25] *Enc. Brit.*, 13th ed., Vol. 15, p. 774.
[26] *Enc. Brit.*, 14th ed., Vol. 17, p. 549.
[27] Sykes, *History of Persia* I, p. 551. [28] *Enc. of Islam* I, p. 581.
[29] Sykes, loc. cit. [30] Le Strange, p. 376. Cf. *Benjamin of Tudela*, p. 49.
[31] *Enc. Brit.*, loc. cit.
[32] *Enc. Islam*, loc. cit. In point of fact the trade route from Khazaria to Khorasan, and the Islamic countries generally, was essentially a land one and avoided the crossing of the Caspian Sea as far as possible. The reason as given

Thence they proceeded to Balkh. The importance of this city, the capital of Bactria,[33] "the mother of cities",[34] cannot be over-estimated in considering the Routes of the Radanites. Yakubi, in the 9th century, calls it the greatest city of all Khorasan, and both its Jewish population and its commercial activities have left their mark in the names of two of its seven gates, one of which was called "Bab al-Yahud" (The Jews' Gate) and the other "Bab Hinduwan" (The Indian Gate).[35]

Bactria, which now forms part of Afghanistan,[36] had originally been an independent country, and "even after Bactria had become a province of Persia proper, it retained much of its importance, not only historically, but as a great entrepôt of commerce between East and West of Asia."[37] "There were several important commercial routes from the city, stretching as far as India and China",[38] and once they arrived at Balkh, the Radanites were firmly set on the road which was to lead them to China.[39]

Ibn Khordadbeh gives us fewer details of this fourth route than of any of the other three. We have seen that his description of the route from France to Khazaria is of the vaguest. The same applies to the last portion of the route from Balkh to China, but for the opposite reason. Whereas his vagueness in describing the first part was due to his ignorance of the route, his brevity in dealing with the last part was due to his familiarity with it. He shortens his

by Pollak (pp. 88 and 89) was that the sea route was impassable both in spring, when there are always violent storms, and in winter, when the north part of the sea is frozen over; and the main trade season was in winter.

[33] *Enc. Brit.*, 13th ed., Vol. 17, p. 549.

[34] Le Strange, p. 420.

[35] Ibid., p. 421.

[36] Baron, *S.R.H.* I, p. 356. Levin, *Ozar Ha-Geonim* I, p. 17, note 3.

[37] Anderson, *Extinct Civilisations of the East*, London, no date, pp. 149–150.

[38] *Enc. Brit.*, 13th ed., Vol. 3, p. 262.

[39] Balkh is famous in Jewish literature as the birthplace of Hiwi-al-Balkhi, one of the first Jewish sectarians, c. 875, *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) XIII, p. 346, note 2.

description of this portion because he has already given it in full in his general account.[40] Actually only two intermediate places between Balkh and China are mentioned by him, the Oxus and Toghozghor. The word Yourts which he uses in connection with the latter is not the name of a place but the word "wurut" (i.e. Yurt—land), so that "the Yourts of the Toghozghor" means simply "the land of the Toghozghor".[41] His account of the Radanite route is therefore to be supplemented from his general account. There he gives a vivid description of the roads from Transoxania to the east. At the ford on the upper course of the Oxus where it separates the Pamirs from Tokharistan the Turks used to wait on the Pamir side and watch for foreign merchants to appear and signal to them from the summit of the opposite mountain. On seeing the signal they crossed the river, and brought back the merchants and their goods and set them on their road to China or to India. He speaks with great admiration of the skill with which these mountain Turks picked their way through the great deserts of rock where no path could be made.[42]

The natural route from Persia to China was across the Oxus, the same route as was taken by the Chinese pilgrim, Hsuen Tang, in the 7th century,[43] and beyond the Oxus lay the province of Khorasan. The name Khorasan in old Persian means simply "the Eastern land", and in the early Middle Ages was applied to all Moslem provinces east of the Great Desert as far as the barrier of the Indian mountains. Thus it consisted of all Transoxania with Sijistan and Kuhistan in the south, and its outer boundaries were

[40] *Enc. Islam* I, 842.

[41] Ibid. Jacobs, from whom the translation of the passage of Ibn Khordadbeh is taken, correctly translates the passage "the Yourts of Toghozghor" without, however, giving any indication of the meaning.

[42] *Enc. of Islam* I, 842.

[43] *Enc. Brit.*, 13th ed., Vol. 20, p. 222. Cf. Chapter IV.

the Chinese desert and the Pamirs towards Central Asia.[44]

This route, like the previous one, followed the Khorasan road, though a different stretch of it.[45] This portion of that famous road crossed the Oxus at Amul, then proceeded to Bokhara and on the golden road to Samarkand, and then on to Farghana and Uzkand, to the borders of China.[46] Both these important towns of Bokhara and Samarkand, the two chief cities of Sugd, ancient Soghdiana, lie in the fertile land between the Oxus and the Jaxartes. Neither is mentioned by Ibn Khordadbeh for the reason given, but there cannot be the slightest doubt but that the Radanites passed through them, and their important Jewish communities have already been referred to.[47] Samarkand lay 150 miles east of Bokhara, and one of its four gates, the Eastern, was called "Bab-el-Sin" (the China Gate),[48] and the Chinese Jews maintain that they reached China via Samarkand.[49] Abu Zaid in the 9th century was also acquainted with the general character of the overland communication between Soghdiana and China. The latter was two months' journey distant, over a country which was almost a waterless desert, though the frontier of the Chinese Empire was not far from Khorasan, and a friend of the author told him that at Khanfu he had seen a man with a bagful of musk on his back, who had come on foot all the way from Samarkand.[50]

These references enable us to determine the route from Bokhara and Samarkand east. The route west, which is also

[44] Le Strange, p. 382.
[45] From the map in Le Strange, frontispiece, it would appear that Route III after Kirman joins Route IV via Herat and Balkh. But there may have been a southern route to India not given by him.
[46] Le Strange, p. 9. Sykes, *History of Exploration*, p. 48.
[47] See Chapter IV.
[48] Le Strange, pp. 460–463.
[49] White, p. 52.
[50] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, p. 134.

that of the Radanites on this journey, is determined by the following passage: "From the marts of Bokhara and Samarkand on the north-east an active trade flowed by the Sea of Aral and the Caspian to Derbend and the lower valley of the Volga on the west . . . Besides the traffic thus opened between the Oxus Valley and the Black Sea, Arab traders pursued their way from Astrabad on the Caspian and Djordjanieh on the Sea of Aral, to the land of the tolerant Khazars."[51] Thus even in this route the same phenomenon is seen as in the other three. Outside Europe these routes were shared by Arab traders, it was only in continuing them to Europe that the Radanites were unique.

One more place remains to be discussed, Toghozghor or Toghazgaz.[52] The name appears in the old Turkish inscriptions of Mongolia,[53] and is a shortened form of Tokuz-Oghuz, i.e., "the nine tribes of Ghuz".[54] Although their land was bounded on the west by the lands of the Khazars,[55] the need of following the recognised trade routes compelled the journey to be made via Khorasan.

Yule[56] has some references to this country which fill the gaps of Ibn Khordadbeh's description, and give us an insight into the dangers of the route. He quotes from the *Travels of Ibn Muhalhil c.* 941, "Then they came to Ghuz . . . their king is very powerful and trades with India and China . . . Then came the Toghazgaz . . . the travellers went 20 days through this country in great fear." In his note he calls the Toghazgaz "one of the greatest tribes of the Turks," and quotes Masudi as stating that they occupied the city of Kushan, between Khorasan and China, supposed to be Kao Ch'ang of the Chinese, the modern Turfan, and that the

[51] Beazley, *Dawn* I, p. 402.
[52] Yule, p. 247.
[53] *Enc. of Islam* I, 840.
[54] Ibid., II, 168.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Loc. cit.

Chinese Empire is contiguous to that of the Toghazgaz, which lies between China and the deserts of Khoraṣan.

The Jewish communities of Khorasan have already been discussed.[57] It is worth noting that the flourishing town of Maymaneh, called in the early Middle Ages "Jahudan al-Kubra" (the Great Jewry), or simply "Al-Yahudiya" (Jews' Town), and which was traditionally supposed to have been first settled by the Jewish captives of Nebuchadnezzar, lay near the Ghur frontier on the road from Balkh.[58]

It will be noticed that in this route alone Sind and Hind are not mentioned, and in fact it was the one route which did not anywhere touch India, proceeding as it did by the northern caravan route.[59] The wording of Ibn Khordadbeh suggests that the third route also was a land route, and it almost certainly proceeded via India overland to China, by the southern route.[60]

[57] Chapter IV.
[58] Le Strange, p. 424.
[59] See Chapter IV.
[60] Ibid.

CHAPTER XVI

GENERAL

THE four routes of the Radanites have now been discussed in detail, and the general picture which emerges is tolerably clear. Although "curiously enough there are few works specially devoted to the subject of trade routes in general,"[1] and the economic history of the Moslem countries at the height of their power has not yet been investigated,[2] sufficient evidence has been gathered to enable us to view the main features of these routes against the general economic background of the time. It shows the Radanites, once they have laid foot on Islamic territory, following the caravans of the Arabs, regularly equipped and using recognised trade routes. These trade routes existed long before the Radanites and continued, at least in part,[3] long after them, and during the period of their activity these Jewish merchants mingled with the stream of Arab traders.

For an account of these routes, apart from the Radanites, we may turn to a book dealing with the history of commerce generally.[4] From this we learn that there were three main routes from Asia to Europe in the early Middle Ages. The first, which the author calls the central route, was the oldest. It began at the head of the Persian Gulf, and after the foundation of Baghdad in about 750, it found there its first important staging post. From Baghdad a caravan route went through the desert to Damascus, where it divided into

[1] *Enc. Brit.*, 14th ed., Vol. 22, p. 371.
[2] Baron, *S.R.H.* III, 78.
[3] The routes to China soon became closed. See Chapter XX.
[4] Clive Day, *A History of Commerce*; First ed. 1907; 1934 edition cited.

two branches, one going to the coast of ancient Phoenicia, the other to Egypt. This route was used continuously, apart from partial interruptions, until nearly the close of the Middle Ages.

The second route, which he calls the southern, was mainly maritime: It had to overcome two great difficulties, the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean, and the navigation of the Red Sea. When the way to overcome these difficulties had been discovered, vessels could leave Egyptian ports in July and reach India by the south-west monsoon in little over two months. The third route was an overland one across the mountains from India to the River Oxus, where it was joined by a caravan route from China. Dividing near Bokhara, one branch went to the Caspian Sea and up the Volga, the other to Trebizond, Constantinople and the Black Sea.[5]

It is not difficult to identify these routes with those of the Radanites. Day's first route is covered by the second (coast of ancient Phoenicia, i.e., Antioch, Damascus, Baghdad; Persian Gulf) and third (Egypt, Damascus, Baghdad) of the Radanites. His second route is covered by the Radanite first, while his third is a combination of parts of the Radanite third and fourth routes. His mention of a branch road on this route from Constantinople to Bokhara confirms the possibility which has been suggested already,[6] that those merchants who, on their return from the first route branched off to Constantinople instead of returning directly to France, linked up with their fellow-merchants on the other routes.

In three respects, however, the Radanite merchants were unusual: in their beginning their journeys in Christian

[5] Pages 85–86.
[6] See Chapter XII.

Europe, in their greater use of the perilous overland routes beyond the Khorasan road to India and China, and in their completing half of the journey on their fourth route before they touched Islamic territory.

The question of the languages spoken by these merchants has also to be considered. According to Ibn Khordadbeh, "these merchants speak Arabic, Persian, Roman, the language of the Franks, Andalusians and Slavs." At first sight it would appear that we are here presented with a picture of a group of brilliant linguists, polyglot merchants who had at their command no less than six languages, Arabic—the most useful of all and therefore mentioned first—Persian, Greek ("Roman"),[7] French ("the language of the Franks"), Spanish ("the language of the Andalusians"), and Slavonic ("the language of the Slavs"). This is the natural interpretation of Ibn Khordadbeh's opening sentence, but the facts militate against it. Apart from the Responsa literature, which is mostly written in Talmudic Aramaic, the vernacular of the Jews of Babylon, and later in Arabic, which superseded it as the vernacular after the Mohammedan conquest, we have to wait for at least a century after the Radanites for Jewish documents of France, Spain and the Slavonic countries, and generally speaking two centuries, so we cannot speak with certainty of the linguistic attainments of the Jews in the 9th century; but there is no reason to believe that they were superior to those of the 11th and 12th. The position in these later centuries can be stated with a fair degree of accuracy, and it was one which admitted of few exceptions. The Jews spoke and wrote the vernacular of the country in which they lived, and they also wrote Rabbinic, or, in Spain, Biblical Hebrew. Thus Rashi (1035–1104), and his grand-

[7] See Roth, p. 217.

sons and successors of the French school, wrote in Hebrew and explained words and phrases by French words or sentences.[8] Words and phrases in Arabic, Greek and other languages quoted by Rashi in his commentary have been shown to have been culled by him from secondary sources.[9] Of the works which created the science of Hebrew grammar in Spain before Rashi, only those of Dunash ibn Labrat and Menahem ibn Saruk, which were written in Hebrew, were available to Rashi. The epoch-making and classical works of Hayyuj and Ibn Janah were a closed book to him as they were written in Arabic.[10] Similarly, the monumental works of Maimonides and other Jewish scholars of Spain were not available to Jews of Christian Europe until they were translated into Hebrew by the famous family of translators, the Ibn Tibbons, who, residing in Provence, where Arabic was known, acted as the carriers of the knowledge of the Jews of Spain to those of Christian Europe.

When Rashi's works, with their French "la'azim",[11] reached Germany and the Slavonic countries, these French words were substituted for their equivalents in German or "the language of Canaan", as Slavonic is called in medieval Jewish literature,[12] with which the works of such Jewish scholars as hailed from Prague, especially Isaac Or Zarua, are plentifully besprinkled.

We have seen also how for their understanding of even such a simple Greek word as "philosophy", the French scholars of the 12th century depended upon a traveller from

[8] See my *Social Life of the Jews of Northern France in the XII and XIII centuries*, London, 1937.
[9] Liber, *Rashi*; London, 1906; p. 82.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Foreign words of the vernacular transcribed in Hebrew characters.
[12] The use of this phrase is indicative of the slave trade which was associated with the Slavonic countries (see Genesis ix, 27) or is a translation of Slav as "slave", which comes to the same thing. See Chapter XVIII.

Greece,[13] just as the Babylonian Gaon Hai obtained it from Jewish scholars from Constantinople.[14]

It is therefore inconceivable that 9th century Jewish merchants hailing from France should have had this extensive and comprehensive knowledge of all the languages of the world except Chinese, or that, for instance, a merchant travelling by any of the first three routes should have equipped himself with a knowledge of Slavonic, which was of use to him only on the fourth.

It has already been pointed out[15] that the words used by Ibn Khordadbeh in speaking of the third route, "the merchants that start from France or Spain", imply that some of these merchants started their journey in Spain, and probably also that some started neither from France nor from Spain, but joined the caravans of their comrades at some intermediate stage of the route. This would fit in with the supposition that the section of the merchants on the first route who, on their return to Farama, branched off to Constantinople instead of returning to the "Palace of the king of the Franks", joined up with other merchants taking other routes, at Khamlif or Bokhara. Ibn Khordadbeh leaves them "high and dry" in Constantinople. The fact that he nowhere gives any hint of a route from France to Constantinople renders it improbable that they returned thence direct to France, though neither that possibility nor the possibility that they returned to Farama and thence either to France or again to China is entirely excluded. On the other hand, the existence of a regular route between Bokhara and Constantinople, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, would favour the other alternative, that they proceeded onward to Bokhara.

[13] Tos. Shabb. 116a. See Chapter IX.
[14] See Chapter XII.
[15] See Chapter XIV.

These considerations suggest a new theory with regard to the Radanites, and give a clue to the problem of their many languages. All the merchants did not necessarily begin their journey in France and end it in China, nor did they all speak all the languages mentioned. We have rather to think of an *association* of merchants who *between them* covered all the four routes from France to China. The merchants from Spain, N. Africa, Egypt, Palestine and Babylonia spoke Arabic, those of the eastern portion of the Eastern Caliphate, Persian, those from Italy and Constantinople, Greek, the French Jews "the language of the Franks", and those of the various Slavonic countries the vernacular of each country. Spanish (Andalusian) was also spoken by the Jews of Spain, especially in the north. The common link between all of them, which made their intercourse and association possible, was Hebrew, which served as a *lingua franca.* Such associations of Jewish merchants were not unknown in the Middle Ages. The letters and credentials given by merchants of Kairouan, the most important staging post on the third route, to their business representatives in distant places empowering them to collect money from their debtors, which is called a custom "existing from the earliest times",[16] point to such an association. So does the power of attorney given by Abu-Imram, an Egyptian Jew, to someone surnamed "the candlestick maker" for his business in Sicily and Morocco, and his houses in Sicily and Spain, in the year 1115.[17] A document has been published showing the existence of such an association of Jewish merchants in France in the 13th century,[18] although at that time international trade had

[16] *J.E.* VII, 416. Harkavy, *Geonic Responsa*, No. 199. Cf. Chapter XIV.
[17] *J.Q.R.* XVI, p. 280; cf. Baron, *S.R.H.* I, 323.
[18] Heliot de Vesoul, *R.E.J.* VIII, 161, IX, 213.

ceased and the commodities mentioned are all local.[19]

A great advantage possessed by the Jews, in addition to their knowledge of two languages, was their ability to read. It is not generally appreciated to what an extent the two "R's" were indispensable to the smooth running of commerce, and therefore to what an extent Christian merchants, with their almost complete lack of these attainments in the 9th century, were handicapped. "The use of writing, indispensable to every business movement of any importance, bears indisputable witness to economic progress",[20] and "the development of instruments of credit presupposes a knowledge of reading and writing among the merchants".[21] But these indispensable attainments were almost completely confined to the Church. There is something almost pathetic in the desperate attempts made by Charlemagne to acquire the art of reading,[22] and "in a society which had lapsed into general ignorance it (the Church) alone still retained these two instruments of culture, reading and writing".[23] It was not until the middle of the 12th century that the municipal councils in Christian Europe began to found schools for the children of the burghers, which were the first lay-schools since the end of the period of antiquity, and by means of which future merchants received elementary instruction[24]; the earliest mention of a clerk on a ship is from the year 1110.[25]

In striking contrast to this universal lay-ignorance among Christians was the almost universal knowledge of these arts among Jews.[26] There was not a time from the Talmudic

[19] Cf. my "Routes of the Radanites", *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) XXXV, p. 280.
[20] Pirenne, *Economic and Social History*, p. 19.
[21] Ibid., p. 123.
[22] Oman, *The Dark Ages*, p. 341.
[23] Pirenne, op. cit., p. 13.
[24] Ibid., *Medieval Cities*, p. 221.
[25] Ibid., *E.S.H.*, p. 19, note.
[26] I have no information about the knowledge of reading and writing in Moslem countries.

period onwards when a knowledge of reading and writing was not the normal possession of every Jew,[27] and among the enactments of the earliest Jewish authority of Christian Europe, Rabbenu Gershom b. Judah of Mayence (960–1028), which were universally adopted by the Jews of the time, was one making it an offence for a Jew entrusted with a letter from one person to another to read its contents.[28] Such a decree would have been incomprehensible among Christians at the time, for neither could the one write nor the other read!

In dealing with the general aspects of the Radanite routes, mention should be made of the evidence of trading activities provided by coins. The subject is too complicated to be dealt with at length, but reference can be made to a recent discovery in Iraq of 3,300 silver coins, the largest hoard of antique coins ever to be found there, which were discovered in the possession of an Iraqui from Zakho. A preliminary examination has shown that the coins were minted in places as far apart as Persia and Spain. Some date from the 8th century, while others, originally engraved in Pehlevi (old Persian), have been overstamped in Arabic by the Arab Caliphs.[29]

Spain and Persia were both, however, in the Mohammedan Empire. Heyd[30] gives a more remarkable example

[27] See my *Social Life*, p. 213, and compare the following remarkable passage: "If the Christians educate their sons, they do so not for God, but for gain, in order that the one brother, if he be a clerk, may help his father and mother and his other brothers. They say that a clerk will have no heir and whatever he has will be ours and the other brothers'. A black cloak and hood to go to church in, and his surplice, will be enough for *him*. But the Jews, out of zeal for God and love of the law, put as many sons as they have to letters, that each may understand God's law. . . . A Jew, however poor, if he had ten sons would put them all to letters, not for gain, as the Christians do, but for the understanding of God's law, and not only his sons, but his daughters." Quoted by B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*; Oxford, 1941; p. 55, from a pupil of Abelard, 12th century.

[28] Finklestein, *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages*, New York, 1924.

[29] London *Evening Standard*, 28th December, 1944.

[30] I, p. 79. Cf. Brutzkus, p. 33.

showing evidence of a route between Mayence and the Far East in the 11th century. Kazwini relates that Abu Bekr Mohammed of Tortosa (b. 1059) saw in Mayence money minted in Samarkand between 913 and 915 by Nasr II b. Ahmed.

Heyd says this find is absolutely unique, and although he suggests that it might have been brought by the Russians, especially the Grand Duke Isaeslav of Kiev, who visited Mayence in 1075, he agrees that there is nothing improbable in its having come in the way of trade.

How long did the journeys of the Radanites take? It is almost impossible to say, more especially as we can have no idea of the length of time which these merchants must have stayed at the various staging points, either awaiting a ship or a caravan, or disposing of their goods and acquiring new ones. It is remarkable that in his whole account Ibn Khordadbeh gives the time taken for only two short overland portions of the two sea routes, the five days from Farama to Kolzum and the three days from Antioch to al-Jabia. These exceptions would prove what has just been said. There was nothing to delay the merchants in these short "hops", neither the absence of favourable sailing conditions nor the need to dispose of or acquire goods, and once they set out from one terminus they could reach the other without delay. In all other parts of the route, a mere adding up of the times taken to travel from point to point would be fallacious. Thus, although a letter from Spain to Babylon took only something more than a year to arrive,[31] the return journey of the embassy of Charlemagne to Haroun al-Raschid took over four years; starting in 797 it reached Spezia in October 801, and did not arrive at the

[31] *J.Q.R.* (N.S.) VII, 486.

court of Charlemagne until the 20th of July, 802.[32] It is true that the difficulty of transporting an elephant must have slowed down the return journey considerably, but in the Radanite journeys there must have been other factors working in the same direction.

To give one example. We have the most complete information about the first Radanite route from Farama. Farama to Kolzum, as stated, took five days. From Aden in the Red Sea to the mouth of the Indus took forty days when the south-west monsoon was blowing, and we can add, say, four weeks for the short journeys from the Indus to Ceylon.[33] Benjamin of Tudela informs us that from Quilon to Ibrig took twenty-three days, and from there to the Sea of Nikpa, the China Sea, another forty.[34] All these give us a travelling time from Farama to China of 136 days, about four and a half months, which would give us nine months for the return journey, Farama—China—Farama. Yet the dependence of navigation on the monsoons made it necessary to remain in Ceylon until the breaking of the eastern monsoon at the end of December or the beginning of January, and rendered the shortest possible time for the return journey from Farama to Ceylon nine months.[35] Thus even assuming that the merchants arrived at Kolzum in June or July, so as to be able to embark at once for India, they could not return by the east monsoon at the end of that year unless they were able to do the last part of the journey, that from India to China and back, between October and December. There is just a possibility that this might be done, since Benjamin[36] apparently gives only thirty-four days for the return journey from China to Zebid,

[32] Caro, I, pp. 129–130. [33] Schall, p. 149. Cf. Chapter XII.
[34] M. N. Adler, *Itinerary*, p. 67, note 1.
[35] See Chapter XII.
[36] Loc. cit.

the principal port of Yemen. Such a journey, however, is more reminiscent of a Cook's tourist than of merchants travelling with wares which they had to dispose of and barter, and it is likely that their progress from India to China was much more leisurely and that they returned by the monsoon in the December of the following year, taking eighteen months for the return journey, Farama—China—Farama,[37] and probably two years for the whole round trip. This would explain the clause in the charter of Louis the Pious which provided for the merchants owning ships to report to the palace for the purpose of paying their taxes in May of each year, or each second year.[38]

If the statement that a certain letter from Spain to Babylon took over a year indicates the normal length of the journey, the third route must have taken considerably longer for the round trip than two years. About the stages in the journey from Babylon to Samarkand we have valuable information in Benjamin of Tudela's itinerary, which gives a total of some four months,[39] and we have the statement of Abu Zaid al-Sirafi that from Soghdiana to the frontier of China was a two months' journey, and that a friend told him that he had seen at Khanfu a man who had travelled on foot from Samarkand to the capital, two months distant.[40] Allowing two months, a mere conjecture, for the journey from the borders of China to Khanfu, we get a year and more from Spain to Babylon, four months from Babylon to Samarkand and six months from Samarkand to Khamdon, capital of China, a total of two years. To this must be added the time from France to Spain, and time for trading.

[37] July to the January of the second year. [38] See Chapter X.
[39] This time is arrived at by adding up the times in Benjamin's itinerary, especially pp. 81–82.
[40] *Enc. of Islam* I, 842; Yule, p. 134.

It seems probable therefore that the round trip varied from two to five years.

The Radanites naturally used whatever means of transport were available in the various countries, horses in the West, camels in the East. From India to China we have mention of goods carried on the backs of goats.[41] It was the inability to transport bulky goods which largely determined the nature of commodities in the Middle Ages generally, and of those of the Radanites in particular. This point is dealt with in the next chapter.

[41] Ishaq of Oman. (See Chapter XIX.)

CHAPTER XVII

COMMODITIES OF THE RADANITES

IBN KHORDADBEH clearly differentiates between the commodities carried by the Radanites from west to east, and those they brought on their return journey from east to west. From the west they transported "eunuchs, female and male slaves, silk, castor, marten and other furs, and swords". These articles they sold in the east, and they purchased or bartered them for "musk, aloes, camphor, cinnamon and other products of the eastern countries".

The trade in "eunuchs, female and male slaves" will be discussed separately in the next chapter, and we therefore confine ourselves in this to the other staple commodities dealt in by the Radanites. It is obvious that three qualities were essential for these commodities, smallness of bulk, a ready market, and prices sufficiently high to compensate these merchants for the length and hazards of their journey. The bulk of articles was limited by the amount that could be carried on horse- or camel-back, and thus "heavy consignments of raw materials or of articles of common consumption . . . were unknown in these days, and here is to be found the most striking contrast between medieval and modern trade."[1]

The range of such articles available in the west was small. "If we consider the articles which fed the international trade of the Middle Ages," writes Pirenne,[2] "it will be observed that industrial products are fewer by far

[1] Pirenne, *Economic and Social History*, p. 143.
[2] Ibid., p. 159.

than agriculture or food. Commodities were spices, wine, corn, salt, fish and wools. Only cloth . . . gave rise to large export trade." The only one of the above-named articles which was available for export from Europe to the east is cloth, and cloth is not mentioned by Ibn Khordadbeh, though it is worthy of note that the stone stele of 1489 of the Jews of Kai-feng-fu states that the colony was founded by "70 families (who) . . . came to the court of Sung, bringing as tribute cloth of cotton from Western lands".[3] Professor Chavannes dates this event between 960 and 1126 (the Sung dynasty), and holds that the Jews came via India.[4]

There is an obvious difference of character between the commodities brought from west to east and those brought from east to west. One surmises that whereas the Radanites had to cast their eyes about in a desperate search for some kind of commodity suitable to transport to the east, they were faced with a veritable "*embarras de richesses*" in selecting their commodities in the east. There is a wealth of meaning in the ". . . and other products of the eastern countries" with which Ibn Khordadbeh concludes his account of the eastern commodities.

Slaves, silk, furs and swords represent the whole range of available articles from the west, and even silk is "suspect", as will be shown.

Nowhere on any of their four routes did the Radanites pass through countries whence furs were obtained. Where then did they obtain them? That question can be answered with a fair degree of certainty. Furs represented the main article of commerce which the northern lands of Europe bartered in exchange for the commodities of the East. "In

[3] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) XIII, p. 21. But see later.
[4] *J.E.* IV, p. 33.

Europe the Italian cities, especially Genoa and Venice, forwarded wares from the East to the West. Trains of pack animals carried the goods over the Alpine passes to the Rhine, whence they were transported by river to Cologne and the cities of Flanders for dispatch to Northern France, England, Northern Germany and Scandinavia. On the return journey furs from the northern forests were the principal articles of traffic."[5] It is therefore practically certain that the Radanites picked up their furs on the Rhine before setting out on their long journeys, and they obtained them in return for the articles from the East which they brought on their return journeys. It was probably the only commodity with which they set out from Christian Europe, slaves, swords and silk being picked up *en route*. They may also, however, on the fourth route have picked up added supplies at Khamlif, the capital of the Khazars, furs brought down the Volga from Russia being an important article of commerce there.[6]

The case was similar with swords. These were not an ordinary commodity of trade from Christian Europe, and one must surmise that the reason why the Radanites took them was because they represented one of the few available commodities. Swords of Frankish make certainly found their way far beyond the borders of the Frankish Empire. Ibn Fozlan in 921 reports that he saw Russians as they came down the Volga to Khazaria to trade. Each one of them carried an axe, a knife or a sword. "The last named were of Frankish work, broad in the blade and wavy in the moulding."[7] But it is a well-known fact that the choicest and best swords in the Middle Ages were those of Damascene

[5] *Enc. Brit.*, 14th ed., Vol. 22, p. 370.
[6] See end of chapter VII. According to Pollak (p. 87) Khazaria was the chief source of furs for the Moslem world.
[7] Beazley, *Dawn* I, p. 436.

manufacture, and is it not possible that the Radanites, who in their third route came to Damascus, acquired the swords there? The answer to this question depends upon what Ibn Khordadbeh considers to be the point of transition from west to east. It has been assumed, perhaps too readily, that by "west" he means the Christian countries or at least Europe, but is it necessarily so? It can just as well be maintained that by "west" he refers to those countries which lay west of his own province of Djibal, or less particularly west of Babylonia, through which all the routes except the first passed. In this case the swords which the Radanites acquired in Damascus and with which they arrived at Baghdad, would be to him the products of the West.

The same question is raised in a more acute form when we consider the last of the articles which they brought from West to East, silk. For the Radanites to take silk from Christian Europe to the East would have been a perfect example of carrying coals to Newcastle, if indeed there were any coals to carry, which there were not. Silk is one of those articles which completely disappear from the capitularies after the blocking of the trade routes.[8] I would therefore suggest, without being able to produce any positive evidence in support of such a view, that silk is a mistake or a mistranslation for woollen cloth. Actually silk was non-existent in Christian Europe, while woollen cloth was a staple article of export.[9] If the reading silk is to be maintained, a "country of the west" other than Christian Europe must be found as the source of supply. Shipper, realising the difficulty, suggests that it came from Spain or Greece.[10] The Radanites went through Spain only in the

[8] Pirenne, *Mahomet and Charlemagne*, p. 152.
[9] See Note 2.
[10] Yiddish ed., p. 31; Hebrew, p. 25. So Grant, p. 66, after "silk" adds in parentheses "presumably Byzantine".

third route, and did not touch Greece at all, though this does not preclude the possibility of the export of silk from that country to one of the points on their route, and it is a fact that with the introduction of the silkworm into Europe in the 6th century, silk was produced in these countries.[11] Damascus comes into consideration with this commodity also, since one of the tissues which formed an article of export in the Middle Ages was called Damaschino,[12] a name which obviously indicates its Damascene origin.

It was in the articles which the Radanites brought from East to West that their main importance lies, in the "musk, aloes, camphor, cinnamon and other products of the East." It is obvious that Ibn Khordadbeh mentions at random four spices and includes all the others in the general phrase "and other products of the East". Thus Heyd[13] enumerates no less than forty-three commodities of this class, which include, in addition to the four mentioned by Ibn Khordadbeh, the following, which also occur in the works of the early French authorities: alum, amber, balsam, cannelle, girofle, incense,[14] adragant gum, gallnuts, pepper, saffron and muscat nuts, in addition to pearls[15] and precious stones; while Kazwini, in the passage cited in the previous chapter, mentions, as the spices of India which were found in Mayence, "pepper, ginger, girofle, costus and galanga."[16]

In other words, there can be no question but that the

[11] White, p. 9.
[12] See the list in Heyd, pp. 677–711.
[13] Pages 563–626.
[14] This also includes a number of aromatic spices. Cf. Rashi on Kerithoth, 6a, who enumerates under incense, resin, galbanum (sweet galbanum, Gittin 69a), spikenard, cinnamon and sabon.
[15] See the interesting long comment of Rashi on Kiddushin 9a and Sotah 15a.
[16] Cf. also the passage from Pirenne in chapter II, and the list given by Day, *History of Commerce*, pp. 78–92. To render food palatable, pepper, cloves, cinnamon, nutmegs and ginger. For drugs, rhubarb, aloes, balsam, borax, gum tragacanth, gum benzoin, cubebs, cardamon, camphor, etc. For dyestuffs, saffron. And "more important than any of these was alum, indispensable for fixing the colour when wool or silk was dyed in the piece."

main, if not indeed the sole, commodity which the Radanite merchants brought back from the East consisted of spices, the commodity which fulfils *par excellence* the three desiderata mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, smallness of bulk, ready market, and huge profits.

Speaking of the economic revival which took place in the 11th and 12th centuries, Pirenne writes[17]: "Spices were the first objects of this trade, and never ceased to occupy the chief place in it down to the very end. . . . Everything combined to give spices this pre-eminence, both the ease with which they were shipped and the high prices they commanded." The reason, as he points out,[18] was that "the Western peoples who, from the end of the Merovingian era had left off using spices, welcomed them with growing eagerness." Hence the importance of the Radanites.

From the blocking of the trade routes under the Carolingians until the revival of trade consequent upon the Crusades, the only spices which entered Christian Europe came in as a result of the trading activities of the Radanites. Gregory of Tours,[19] at the very beginning of this period of Jewish monopoly, quotes them as selling spices at Tours at exorbitant prices with the complicity of the bishop; in Paris, the Jew Priscus was furnisher of "spices"[20] to King Chilperic.[21]

Pepper had become so rare and dear in Carolingian times that it was sometimes used as money,[22] while cloves were

[17] *Economic and Social History*, p. 143. [18] Page 144.
[19] *History of France* IV, 12.
[20] Some authorities doubt whether the word "species" in this particular passage refers to spices only. Heyd I, p. 125, says it refers to every kind of precious object, while Pirenne (*Mahomet et Charlemagne*, p. 68) takes it as the equivalent of the modern word "specie" and calls Priscus "banker" to Chilperic.
[21] Gregory of Tours, *History of France* VI, 5; cf. Pirenne, loc. cit.
[22] Pirenne, *Economic and Social History*, p. 12. Cf. *Enc. Brit.*, 13th ed., Vol. 21, p. 127, which refers to the "exorbitant price in the Middle Ages"; and Day, p. 79, "For common use the price was prohibitive".

even more expensive, being two or three times the price of pepper.[23] Pepper came from the Malabar coast which was one of the places of call of the Radanites.[24]

It will be shown later[25] that the activity of the Radanites came to a close probably at the end of the 9th century. The opening up of the blocked trade routes followed upon the Crusades, the first of which was in 1096. There is, however, definite evidence that despite the cessation of the Radanite activity and before the Christians could take over the trade, spices still came in to Christian Europe. Thus Kazwini, in the passage quoted in the last chapter, after referring to the coins from Samarkand which were found in Mayence, adds: "It is remarkable to find in this city, situated at the extreme West, spices which one finds only in the Far East, such as pepper, ginger, girofle, costus and galanga, all products of India," and Heyd is of the opinion that Kazwini is speaking of the period of Abou-Bekr.[26] If so, it proves that Mayence got spices even before the Crusades, and he suggests that they came via Venice. There is no reason, however, to make this assumption. As late as 1050, Naharai b. Nissim, a Jew of Fostat, while in Kairouan, bought indigo, musk, cinnamon, pepper and pearls, for which he sold furs and wheat.[27] In other words, the circumstances which brought the activity of the Radanites to a close made it impossible for them to go on their long journeys to the ends of the world, but their use of the "ferry" from Christian Europe to the Mohammedan world as far as Egypt was not thereby affected.

In this connection should be mentioned a point which has

[23] Day, loc. cit.
[24] Heyd II, pp. 146–147.
[25] Chapter XX.
[26] Heyd I, pp. 78–80.
[27] Starr, *Zion* (Hebrew) I, pp. 430–453.

been completely overlooked, and which well deserves investigation for its bearing on the economic history of medieval Europe. This is the evident familiarity with spices shown by the Jewish scholars of Christian France before the Crusades, of whom Rashi is the most eminent.[28] There is hardly a spice from the East which Rashi does not mention by its name.[29] It has generally been assumed that Rashi obtained his remarkable general knowledge from the famous fairs which were held at Troyes, and by his contact there with the merchants of many nations,[30] but it has recently been shown that this supposition rests upon a mistake, since there were no fairs in Troyes during Rashi's lifetime, the first after 427 being held in 1114, ten years after his death.[31] It seems fair to assume that these spices were generally known to the Jews even before the Crusades,[32] a fact which would point to a continuation of the Radanite trade.

[28] Rashi's last years were after the First Crusade (1035–1104) but his works were completed before. A study of the Arukh of Nathan b. Yehiel of Rome (1035–1106) in this connection would well repay the labour.

[29] To give a few examples: Adragant gum, Gittin 19a. Aloes, Shabbat 50a, Pesachim 30b, Abodah Zara 33b, Ketuboth 68b and 107b. Balsam, Shabbat 61b. Cinnamon, ibid. 65a. (For the word in the original the Arukh says cannelle, and Tosafot Berachot 36b says that cannelle is cinnamon, but in Heyd's list they are enumerated separately.) Coriander, Yoma 68b, Gittin 70a. Gall-nuts, ibid. 11a. Ginger, Shabbat 65a and Gittin 86a. Girofle, ibid. 68b. Gum Shabbat 104b, Bezah 33b. Musk, Berachot 43a. Saffron, Shabbat 89b. Pepper, Yoma 68b. "Coriander seeds are large and round like those of pepper", indicating a complete familiarity with pepper.

[30] Berliner *Geisteswerkstatt Rashi's*, Frankfort, 1905.

[31] Baron, *Rashi*, pp. 48–50.

[32] The revival of trade consequent upon the Crusades is reflected in the Tosafists, the successors of Rashi, who both correct and add to Rashi's information. Thus on Berachot 37a, Rashi translates "oraz" as "millet". Tosafot in loc. correctly points out that oraz is rice (the same word) while the contiguous word "dohan" is millet. (But even here Pirenne—*E.S.H.*, p. 145—ascribes the import of rice from the East to Europe to the beginning of the 13th century.) In the same passage he says: "To these were added cotton, which the Genoese (called) by its Arabic name cotone". But already Rashi (Shabb. 21a and 110a) refers to "coton" by that name. So also Tosafot Ber., 36b, lays down the blessings which have to be recited on ginger, sugar, muscat-nuts and cinnamon, thus indicating their use by the common people for the first time within recent years.

So also by the time this period opens the trade of the Jews of France with the Church in incense was so deeply rooted and firmly established that the Jewish authorities were impotent to stop it, despite their theological objections to it.[33]

[33] See my *Social Life,.etc.*, p. 93.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SLAVE TRADE

THERE remains for consideration what was undoubtedly the chief article of commerce from West to East, "eunuchs, male and female slaves".

Before discussing the extent and ramifications of this trade, especially during the period of the Radanites, it should in all fairness be pointed out that slave-trading was permitted in Europe right down to the 13th century,[1] and all the enactments of the Church, to which reference will be made, confined themselves to one specific point, the prohibition against Jews owning, or dealing in, Christian slaves. There was no objection either to Christians owning Christian and, of course, other slaves, nor against Jews dealing in heathen slaves. It was in every sense of the word, apart from the moral considerations which did not weigh with anyone at that time, a legitimate trade.

There can be no doubt, however, that the Jews in Europe in the 9th century showed a decided preference for this trade, although the main statement to this effect comes from a hostile witness, Agobard, Bishop of Lyons, who fought a strenuous and losing battle against their rising influence and power.[2] The reason is not far to seek, and has already been indicated in the previous chapter. The principal function of the Jews in Europe before and during the years under review was to act as international traders carrying the products of the East to the West, and vice versa.

[1] *J.E.* XI, 402.

[2] Agobard, *App. ed. Baluze*, p. 62, 5. Rozière, *Recueil général des formules*, 27, 28, 79. See Chapter I.

Before the Radanite period they shared this trade with the Syrians, and during this period they monopolised it. Such trade depended upon barter more than upon monetary transactions, and slaves were the most available and valuable commodity in the West. Pirenne is therefore probably correct when he says[3] "the slave trade, to which the Jews still assiduously applied themselves in the 9th century, must have had its origin in an earlier time," and Jews are mentioned as slave-merchants in Narbonne under the Merovingians.[4]

Nor is it to be supposed that this trade consisted only in the sale of slaves from Europe to the Moslem countries. There was a steady trade in them in Europe itself. "With the rise of Islam large opportunities were afforded to the Jews to supply Moslem slaves to the Christian world," as well as "Christian slaves to that of Islam."[5] The centre of commerce in slaves and eunuchs in Christian Europe was Verdun,[6] and Jews must have frequented those markets and done their business there. Jews, but not Radanites. The Radanites were the *international* traders *par excellence*, and they saw in slaves a commodity which they could exchange for the spices of the East, which promised so much greater profit than slaves from East to West. It is for that reason that, as is indicated by Ibn Khordadbeh, the Radanites did not engage in this commerce on their return journey. It was slaves (with the other commodities) from West to East, and spices from East to West.

In the first chapter mention was made of the spread of the Jews of the Frankish Empire eastwards across

[3] *Medieval Cities*, p. 20.

[4] *Aronius Regesten*, p. 19, No. 53.

[5] *J.E.* XI, 402. Cf. also Day, *History of Commerce*, p. 79. "Slaves were imported from Western Asia and Africa".

[6] Pirenne, p. 236.

Germany, following upon the opening up of the Empire, and the permission given to the Jews to take up residence wherever they desired. It is highly probable that this spread was directly connected with the slave trade. Caro[7] maintains that the settlement of Jews in Magdeburg and Merseburg was for the purposes of the slave-trade. Until the year 820 Germany was indeed the main source for slaves, but in that year the Frankish kings issued a series of ordinances, consequent upon the Christianisation of Germany, prohibiting this traffic in Germany.[8] It was now necessary for the Jews to go further afield in their search for this commodity. East of the Elbe, in Bohemia and Moravia, was the nearest available point.[9] This country, called Slavonia, was still pagan, and there was therefore no canonical prohibition against Jews trading in slaves there. The connection between Slavonia and the slave-trade has been perpetuated for all time in the very word slave, which means, merely, a Slav, an inhabitant of Slavonia.

Of this trade Prague, the capital of Bohemia, was the great mart.[10] The travellers from Germany to Prague had to go via Passau on the Danube, which guards the supply routes from Bavaria to Bohemia. The list of tariffs of Passau in the year 906 makes specific mention of Jewish slave-dealers coming there from Slavonic lands and states that they had to pay the same taxes as Christian merchants.[11] It will be seen that this presupposes the transport of the slaves westwards from Prague, and therefore possibly to Verdun where they were disposed of, and it therefore

[7] I, p. 191.
[8] Shipper, Yiddish, p. 32.
[9] Caro I, p. 138.
[10] See Chapter XV, and *infra*.
[11] Shipper, Hebrew, pp. 29–30. "Legitimi mercatores, id est Judaei et ceteri mercatores undecunque venerint de ista patria vel de aliis patriis iustum telonem solvant tam de mancipiis quam de aliis rebus". *Aronius Regesten*, No. 22, Brutzkus, p. 32, gives the date as 904.

does not affect the Radanites. But as will be seen, Jews sold slaves from France to Spain.

For the importance of Prague as the centre of the slave-trade we have the valuable eye-witness account of Ibrahim ibn Yakub, who visited the city in 962–5. This is somewhat later than the Radanites, but there is no reason to doubt that the trade had been going on for centuries before his visit. He gives us a vivid picture of Russians and Slavs coming from Cracow with their wares, as well as from "the land of the Turks";[12] Mohammedans, Jews and Turks dealt in slaves, tin and furs, the medium of exchange being Byzantine gold pieces.[13]

As stated above, the Church violently opposed the possession of Christian slaves by Jews. In 583 the Council of Macon permitted Christians to re-purchase slaves from the Jews for 12 sous each.[14] As early as the 7th century Gregory the Great tried to prevent the Jews of Marseilles from holding them, and asked Brunehaut to promulgate a law forbidding it.[15]

Nevertheless, the Carolingians afforded every protection and privilege to the Jews in this trade. In three of the charters granted by Louis the Pious specific mention is made of the right of the recipients to purchase and sell foreign slaves.[16] The Church, headed by the virulent Agobard of Lyons, appears to have undertaken a campaign to baptise those slaves forcibly and thus automatically obtain for them their freedom. Against this attempt the Jews had the undivided support of the king. A classic example of this support, ending with the disgrace of Agobard, has

[12] Hungary, Caro I, p. 192.
[13] Ibid. See Chapter IX, note 29; Chapter XV, note 19; and Chapter XIX.
[14] Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, p. 81.
[15] Ibid., p. 66, quoting Joffe-Wattenbach, *Regesta*.
[16] Pirenne, op. cit., p. 234. Katz, p. 102.

already been given in Chapter I. In another case, Domatus and Samuel, the beneficiaries of the first charter, swore that certain persons were attempting to baptise their slaves so that they could get their freedom. Louis the Pious, prohibited it on pain of loss of life and property.[17] Agobard in his diatribe makes explicit reference to the fact that Jews sold Christian slaves to Spain,[18] and accuses the Jews of buying stolen Christian children as slaves.[19]

That slaves, though not necessarily Christian ones, were sold by the Jews to Spain, is shown by the charter granted by Louis the Pious to Abraham of Saragossa, and the accusation of the purchase of kidnapped Christian children was probably a deliberate attempt to incite the Christians against the Jews. On the other hand, there seems to be little doubt that despite the prohibition, a certain amount of clandestine trade in Christian slaves did go on.[20] In 1085, Judith, wife of the Polish duke Vladislav Herman, is praised for ransoming Christian slaves from Jews,[21] and about the same time Duke Adalbert protested against the sale of slaves in Czechia, and had to leave his post.[22] There is in the medieval Jewish literature one responsum dealing with the case of a Jew who stole a slave from another Jew.[23] On this passage Waxman[24] says: "A single responsum concerning the stealing of a slave from a Jew by a fellow Jew shows that in spite of numerous restrictions placed by the Church upon the buying of slaves by the Jews, some

[17] Katz, ibid.
[18] "Praedicavimus Christianis ut mancipia eis (Judaeis) Christiana non venderent, ut ipsos Judaeos Christianos vendere *ad Hispanos* non permitterent". Agobardus, De Insolentia Judaeorum, Chaps. III and IV in Migne, *Patrologia*, 10472.
[19] Pirenne, p. 236.
[20] Cf. Pirenne, *E.S.H.*, p. 133.
[21] *Aronius Regesten*, No. 169.
[22] Ibid.
[23] *Responsa of Meir of Rothenburg*, ed. Prague, No. 912.
[24] *History of Jewish Literature* II, 171.

managed to own and possess slaves." There is, however, no evidence that the slave in question was a Christian, and, as has been stated, there was no prohibition against possessing pagan slaves. An interesting Responsum of Isaac Or Zarua of Vienna, who hailed from Prague, mentions a manumitted slave who became converted to Judaism and married a Jewess.[25]

A rather obscure Geonic Responsum makes definite reference to the clandestine purchase of slaves by Jews. "In some places only female slaves can be bought openly and legally; with the exception of these they do not allow the Jews to purchase them, (and they can only do so) in secret and at peril."[26]

It is impossible to say with certainty where these slaves were sold by the Radanites. Their sale to Spain has already been mentioned. Day[27] says that they were sold in the great market at Cairo. The fact is that at any place in the Mohammedan world there was a ready market for them. They were the most important commodity in that part of the world,[28] and the whole trade was closely bound up with the Eastern trade, the Orient seeing in them good barter for the choicest Oriental goods.[29]

[25] *Or Zarua* I, No. 775, 4, and 776, 4. The Responsum is from Isaac Or Zarua to Eleazar b. Samuel and Isaiah b. Mali (?). That he was a convert to Judaism is proved by his name, Obersh b. Abraham Abinu. The patronymic ("son of our Father Abraham") is given to converts.
[26] Levin, *Ozar Ha-Geonim* VII (Yebamoth), pp. 118–121. The context does not give any indication of the place and it shows that it deals with slaves purchased not for trade but for private use.
[27] *History of Commerce*, p. 79.
[28] Cf. Caro I, p. 191.
[29] Shipper, Yiddish, p. 32.

CHAPTER XIX

RADANITE CONTEMPORARIES

THE Radanites are surely the most anonymous merchants in history. We have one sole reference to them by their collective name, and we have seen that in all probability the very name is the nearest possible approach to an anonymous name, if the paradox may be permitted, meaning nothing more than "travellers, wayfarers".[1] Even the other suggestions "Rabbanites", "merchants of Rhages", "Sailors of the Rhone", do not give any personal indications.[2]

It is impossible to say that such and such a merchant or traveller was a Radanite. We cannot do more than suggest that a specific traveller who lived at the same time as the Radanites, and who journeyed over part of the routes which they covered, might possibly have been one, and the title of this chapter has to be understood with this important and essential qualification. It does not aim at more than mentioning some Jews in the 9th century who made these journeys, and its value lies not so much in an identification of the Radanites, as in giving a proof that Jews did travel along those routes, and it can thus be admitted as evidence that the Radanites did also.

There is no period of Jewish history so sparsely documented as the 9th century. Indications are vague and unsatisfactory, and it is only by piecing them together that one obtains a picture of fairly constant Jewish movement along the fundamental portion of these routes, i.e. those which lie at the two extremes of the Mohammedan Empire.

[1] But see Appendix.

[2] See Chapter XI.

In what follows it is assumed that the fact of a Jew travelling from Spain to Samarkand does not call for any especial notice, since there was nothing unusual or extraordinary in such movement from one point of the Islamic world to the other. On the other hand, the fact of a Jew travelling from Christian Europe to that Empire, or in China, or from India to Europe, throws light upon the essential character of the activity of the Radanites.

1. *Abraham of Saragossa.* We know nothing of this individual apart from what has already been stated.[3] He was the beneficiary of a charter from Louis the Pious, granted before 825. The fact that he crossed the barrier from Mohammedan Spain to Christian Europe, and that the letter of protection given to him differs from those granted to Christian merchants just in those points which facilitated international travel, e.g., the freedom from imposts on travel, justifies us in regarding him as a possible Radanite.

2. *Eldad ha-Dani.* There is a double interest from our point of view in this remarkable adventurer who in the year 880 arrived in Kairouan with an astonishing story of adventure, claiming to belong to an independent Jewish tribe, speaking Hebrew which had a number of unknown words in it, and in possession of a ritual which differed in material points from that in vogue among the Rabbinic Jews.[4] He has been dismissed by all scholars as a charlatan, an impostor, or a cunning missionary of a heretical sect. Even discounting his own story, he deserves to be included in the

[3] See Chapter I.

[4] The classical edition of his story is by Epstein. The extract in Halper, *Post-Biblical Hebrew Texts*; Jewish Publication Society of America, 1921; Vol. I, pp. 25–29, contains the relevant portion. Reference can be made to Graetz, *J.E.*, s.v., and Pinsker, *Likkute Kadmoniyot*, pp. 108–109. An English translation of the narrative portion of his story is in E. Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, p. 4 ff.

list of possible Radanite "worthies" for the historical part of his journeys. For whether he came from Yemen,[5] India,[6] or east of Babylon,[7] his journey from any of these places to Babylon,[8] and then on to Kairouan and thence to Spain,[9] covered a longer portion of any Rádanite route that was traversed by any other individual. According to a Karaite author, R. Judah Hadassi, he made two journeys, first to Egypt, whence he returned home, and then a second journey which brought him to Kairouan and was the subject of the famous query of the scholars of that place to R. Zemach Gaon. According to R. Dunash b. Tamim, he came to the West via Palestine,[10] a journey which would coincide completely with the third Radanite route, while according to Adler,[11] his journey was from Azania, in Yemen, to the Indian Ocean, the north-east of the Persian Gulf, overland across Paravata (Mount Paran) to Baghdad, and thence to Kairouan and Spain, which is roughly a combination of the second and third.

I have, however, elsewhere[12] given my reasons for believing that Eldad's account of his travels has been unjustly impugned. If reliance can be placed on his account, great importance attaches to his statement that after his deliverance from his captors, "I was brought to China[13] where a Jewish merchant of the tribe of Issachar purchased me for

[5] Adler, loc. cit.
[6] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) I, p. 95.
[7] Pinsker, op. cit., p. 108.
[8] *J.Q.R.* I, pp. 106 and 108. Doubt has been expressed whether he was actually in Babylon, as the reason for thinking so was the fact that the two Rabbis whom he saw are called by him "Mar", a title which was thought to be confined to Babylonian Rabbis, whereas, in fact, it occurs among Egyptian scholars also. But the passage in *Teshuboth ha-Geonim*, Livorno, 1849, p. 54b, almost certainly refers to Eldad ha-Dani.
[9] Cf. Adler, p. 31.
[10] According to a manuscript in Pinsker's possession. See Pinsker, loc. cit.
[11] Page 4.
[12] Eldad Ha-Dani and China, *J.Q.R.* XXXVI, Jan. 1946, pp. 231–8.
[13]]'ɔ. This is the most acceptable reading. Cf. Halper, p. 214, and *J.Q.R.* I, p. 102.

32 golden coins and returned with me to his country, beyond the land of the Medes and Persians."[14] This gives us a rare and almost unique[15] reference to an actual Jewish merchant in China just at the time that the Radanites visited that country. Moreover, there is little doubt that "the mountains which are beyond the land of the Medes and Persians," the home of the merchant of "the tribe of Issachar", is the country round Khorasan, where independent Jewish tribes persisted at least to the 12th century, the time of Benjamin of Tudela.

3. *Isaac.* One would give much to know more about this remarkable man, the sole survivor of the embassy of three whom Charlemagne sent to Haroun al-Raschid in 797, and who brought back the first elephant seen in Europe, in 802. On his return journey he passed through Kairouan, whose important Jewish community at the time has already been described.[16] Thence he crossed to Italy. It is therefore probable that his outward journey followed the same course and coincided with the first part of the third Radanite route. It has been suggested that he was the leader of the embassy,[17] but even if he was not, the reason for his choice must have been his knowledge of the route, and possibly of Arabic. The fact that he alone survived possibly testifies to the greater ease with which a Jew could travel from Christian Europe to the Mohammedan world, a circumstance upon which the whole activity of the Radanites is based. It is worthy of mention here that Haroun also sent an embassy to China, though we have no evidence that there were any Jews in it, and that there is reason to believe

[14] Halper, p. 26, lines 21–24.
[15] The only other case is Ishaq of Oman, unless Suleyman was a Jew. See *infra*, p. 185.
[16] See Chapter I.
[17] See Chapters III and XIV.

that a Jew returned with Isaac from Baghdad to Aix-la-Chapelle.[18]

4. *Ishaq of Oman.* An account of this interesting person has been published by E. Adler.[19] Although Ishaq (Isaac), "the Jew's son" as he is called, appears to be very much of a "lone wolf" in his commercial transactions, he is interesting to us as a 10th century Jew who travelled on business from Oman to India, and thence via Sumatra to Canton, which is, of course, the Radanite second route after al-Obolla. His story gives an insight into the tremendous profits which could be made in this trade even without bringing its products to Christian Europe, and adds point to the statement of Saadya Gaon[20] a few years later that it was popularly thought by the ignoramuses of Baghdad that "whoever goes to India becomes rich".

Ishaq, in consequence of some quarrel, left Oman for India. After thirty years he returned in his own ship loaded with cargo. He compromised with the authorities on the question of tariffs by paying a round sum of one million dirhems. "His prodigious good fortune made a stir and excited the envious." The commodities he carried were musk, textiles, jewels, silverware and porcelain. Ishaq left again for China, and at Serboza in Sumatra the Governor asked him for a levy of 20,000 dinars for safe passage.

In his account he says that merchandise was carried over the mountains on the backs of goats, a fact which points to an overland route from India to China, and he says that the Emperor of China had jewels on his neck such as the kings of the East and the West did not possess.

5. *Jacob ibn Tarik.* Jacob ibn Tarik, or Aben Scheara,

[18] See *infra* under Machir.
[19] "A Jewish Merchant in China in the 10th Century", in *Memorial Volume to H. P. Chajes*, Vienna, pp. 1–5.
[20] Emunot Ve-Deot, Introduction.

as he is called in Hebrew, is said about the year 820 to have carried astronomical works from Ceylon to Baghdad.[21] He is also said to have been employed as an interpreter at the translation of an Indian work into Arabic.[22] It is stated by Steinschneider, however,[23] that the name of the person here referred to has not come down to us, and that the name Jacob ibn Tarik or Jacob ibn Scheara is actually that of the Arabic translator. He ascribes the mistake to Azariah de Rossi.

6. *Joseph of Spain* is said about the same time to have introduced to the western world from India the so-called Arabic numerals.[24]

7. *Machir.* A tradition preserved by Abraham ibn Daud in the Sefer ha-Kabbalah[25] says that the grant of one-third of the city of Narbonne[26] was made, not to the Jewish community, but to a certain Rabbi Machir whom Charlemagne summoned from Babylon through the agency of Haroun al-Raschid. He was to serve as Rabbi in order to instruct the Jews whom Charlemagne had permitted to settle in Narbonne. The emperor granted him numerous prerogatives and appointed him head of the community. He is compared to the Babylonian exilarch.[27] The story is repeated by Abraham Zacuto, who says that Machir and his descendants became the exilarchs of France.[28]

Steinschneider,[29] overlooking the reference in the Seder ha-Kabbalah, regards the statement of Zacuto, which he

[21] Sir Matthew Nathan, Presidential Address to the Union of Jewish Literary Societies, 1912. Quoted by Elkan Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, Introduction, p. XII.
[22] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) XIII, p. 108.
[23] Ibid., Note 1.
[24] Sir Matthew Nathan, op. cit.
[25] See Neubauer, *Medieval Jewish Chronicles* I, 82.
[26] See Chapter I, note 17.
[27] Katz, p. 160.
[28] *Sefer Yuhasin*, London edition, p. 84.
[29] *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) XII (1900), p. 490.

calls a single reference, as suspect, since, he says, "the very name, which is found only in France, and later on in Provence—at first perhaps as the name of Gershon b. Judah's[30] brother—excites doubt."[31] Both the names Eldad and Machir have been used as evidence to disprove the authenticity of the claims made on behalf of those who bore them, the former because "the name Eldad was never employed by Jews in the East,"[32] and the latter because it is found only in France. As stated by Steinschneider, its first appearance in France is about a century and a half after Charlemagne, but its *later* use by the Jews of that country does not exclude the possibility of it having been introduced by a Jew from another country. This Machir, if the account of Abraham ibn Daud is correct, was such an outstanding personality that it is wholly natural that later generations of Jews should adopt the name.[33] The non-occurrence of the name Machir in Babylon is still a difficulty like that of Eldad. It is worthy of note, however, that in the remarkable Chinese-Jewish codex published by White,[34] which still awaits an expert and detailed analysis, both the names Eldad and Machir occur among the names of those Jews.[35] The Chinese Jews, as has been proved beyond reasonable doubt,[36] hailed from Persia, and in their isolation preserved many names which were used by those Jews, including some which fell into desuetude elsewhere. It is also entirely in

[30] The first known great Jewish scholar of Christian Europe. He lived in Mayence, 960–1028.

[31] Cf. also Geiger in *Hebräische Bibliographie*, III, 1 ff.

[32] See Neubauer, *J.Q.R.* (O.S.) I, p. 98.

[33] Cf. *Geonica* I, p. 55. "Apropos of names in Geonic times, is the name of the Gaon דודאי identical with דודאי used by French Jews, recorded in Gross, *Gallia Judaica*, 149?" So the name Abba Mari, which is regarded as essentially Judaeo-Provençale, is in origin Geonic. Cf. Ginze Schechter, p. 504.

[34] Vol. III.

[35] *Eldad* No. 123, *Elidad* Nos. 189 and 190. (See my *Eldad Ha-Dani and China*). *Machir* No. 83.

[36] See Chapter VI.

accordance with what would be expected, that Charlemagne should "import" a Rabbi from Babylon. Jewish studies in France and Spain had not yet begun, the Jews there were wholly dependent for their religious life upon Babylon, and that he should take advantage of the route opened up by his embassy for this purpose is quite natural. On balance, therefore, the evidence would seem to favour the authenticity of this report.

8. *Suleyman.* Godbey[37] states that "the Spanish Jewish traveller, Soliman of Andalusia (875–900), records that he found in all the large cities of China Jews who understood Hebrew and who received him hospitably," while Graetz[38] speaks of "Sulaiman, a Jewish traveller of the 9th century." Could these statements be authenticated, they would constitute the most valuable evidence yet adduced, since they would give us a Jew who travelled during the time of the Radanites along practically their whole route, from Spain to China. Unfortunately there does not seem to be the slightest basis for such an assumption. Godbey and Graetz obviously have in mind the work of Abu Zaid al-Sirafi, and in view of their statements it is as well to give a full account of the history of this work. In 1718 Abbé Eusebius Renaudot published his *Anciennes Relations de l'Inde et de la Chine de Deux Voyageurs Mahometans qui y allèrent dans le IX-ieme Siècle.* A new translation was published by Reinaud, Paris, 1845.[39] The second part of the work was written about 916 by Abu Zaid Hassan al-Sirafi, who gives the date of the first half, being the account written by an earlier traveller, Suleiman the

[37] *The Lost Tribes a Myth*, p. 397.

[38] *History* IV, 376.

[39] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, p. 126. *Enc. of Islam* I, 842. I have not been able to see the latest work on the subject, *Voyage du Marchand Arabe Sulayman en Inde et en Chine. Redigé en 851, suivi de Remarques par Abu Zayd Hassan (vers 916)* by Gabriel Ferrand, Paris, 1922, quoted by Latourette, p. 230.

merchant, as 851. This Suleiman is the earliest Arab to reach China of whom a record has been preserved.[40] Yule[41] indeed doubts whether this first part is by Suleiman,[42] who is mentioned only once, and gives his opinion that it consists of notes made by an anonymous author of his own experiences in India and of what he had heard from others who visited China, Suleiman among them.[43] It will thus be seen that there is not the slightest evidence of Suleyman having been a Jew. Graetz probably hastily assumed so from his name, ignoring the fact, of which he was perfectly aware, that Biblical names are as common among Arabs as among Jews, while of the statement of Godbey that he was an Andalusian there is not a vestige of evidence. There can be no doubt that Suleyman was a *marchand arabe*.[44]

9. *Ibrahim Ibn Yakub*. As has been stated, Ibrahim visited Prague in 962. He came from North Africa via the Adriatic Sea and over the Eastern Alps to Bohemia. He knew Arabic, Hebrew, Greek and the Romance languages.[45] In Prague he saw the Jews engaged in the slave trade. Shipper says[46] "the Jewish merchants mentioned by Ibrahim are, without question, Radanites on their return journey from the Asiatic east via Khazaria, Hungary and over Southern Slovakia." Both Ibrahim and these merchants qualify for the ascription in all respects but one, the date. Reasons will be given in the next chapter for the belief that by the second half of the 10th century the Radanites had ceased to carry on their activities.

[40] Sykes, *History of Exploration*, p. 48.
[41] Page 126.
[42] I have copied the various spellings of the name given by the authorities quoted.
[43] From the title of Gabriel Ferrand's work (see note 37) it appears that he does ascribe it to Suleyman.
[44] As stated by Heyd I, p. 30, Renaudot and Ferrand.
[45] Shipper, p. 29. See chapters IX and XIX.
[46] Ibid.

CHAPTER XX

THE END OF THE RADANITES

It is obvious from the foregoing chapters that the emergence of the Radanite merchants in the 9th century depended upon a unique combination of circumstances, each one almost entirely unrelated to the other, yet each of them an indispensable link in the chain forged by these merchants, a chain which joined France to China by four separate routes. These circumstances were: the blocking of the trade routes between Christian Europe and the Mohammedan world to everyone except the ubiquitous Jews; the pacification of Western Europe as far as the Elbe and the Oder; the consolidation of the vast Mohammedan Empire with its organised and well-defined caravan routes from Spain to Khorasan; the peace of the Indian Ocean; the extension of the Chinese Empire, under the T'ang Dynasty, to the very borders of Persia, and the organisation of the means of communication within that Empire; and lastly, the peace and prosperity of the Jewish kingdom of the Khazars with its highly developed trade. The absence of any one of these conditions would have rendered the Radanite journeys impossible. The remarkable fact is that nearly all of them, totally unrelated though they were, ceased to obtain about the same time, at the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 10th century, and with them the whole complicated Radanite organisation collapsed like a house of cards.

To begin with China. The ominous events which were to cause a complete cessation of Arab, and therefore

Jewish, trade with China cast their shadows before as early as 845 when the Emperor Wu banned and persecuted all "foreign" religions which had been tolerated and even patronised by the earlier T'ang rulers.[1] Thirty-three years later, in 878, a rising, headed by a rebel called Banshaa,[2] took place against foreign merchants and culminated in the sack of Khanfu (Quinsay), where there perished in the massacre "120,000 Moslems, Jews, Christians and Parsees who were there on business of traffic".[3] Abu Zaid, who is the authority for this statement, wrote in 916, and the first half of his work, as has been stated in the previous chapter, consists of the notes made by the earlier traveller and merchant Suleyman in 851. Abu Zaid begins his own "Relation" by remarking on the great change which had taken place in the interval of 65 years between his own account and that of Suleyman, and which had entirely stopped the Arab trade with China, thrown that country into anarchy, and destroyed its power.[4]

Nor was it only the internal disturbances in China which contributed to the decay of that trade. Both the land and the sea routes which were used equally by the Radanites became blocked about the same time. Towards the end of the 10th century the Sammanides, who ruled the district round Khiva which was the gateway to the overland route to China, fell before the Tartars, who henceforth formed a barrier against Western traders.[5] With regard to the sea-route, we have the clear statement of Masudi in his *Murudj al-Dhahab* (Golden Prairies) written in 947 and rewritten in 956. He bemoans the fact that there was no longer a direct sea-route between Persia and China and that

[1] T'sui-Chi, *Short History of China*, p. 193. [2] Yule, p. 133.
[3] Cf. Jacobs, pp. 198–199, Beazley, *Dawn* I, p. 148, Yule, p. 133.
[4] Yule, loc. cit.
[5] Jacobs, p. 199.

Galla (Point de Galle) had become a meeting place for Arabian and Chinese ships. "In olden times," he says, "it was otherwise, when the Chinese ships sailed to the land of Oman, to Siraf, to the coast of Fars and Bahrein, to Obolla and Basra, and ships from these places likewise traded directly with China. It was only after justice could no longer be relied upon and the above described state of affairs in China had come about that they began to meet at this intermediate point."[6] Finally, with the fall of the T'ang dynasty in 907, communications between China and the West were broken off.[7]

The blocking of the land- and sea-routes similarly affected the trade with India and thus by one and the same blow the main countries of the East, where the Radanites found their most profitable sources of trade, were irretrievably lost. With them were virtually cut off the nascent Jewish communities in India and China, which hitherto had been on the high roads of the trade routes, but now became almost completely isolated.[8] It was not that, as the *Jewish Encyclopedia* states in reference to the Chinese Jews,[9] "their commercial decline broke off their connections with the West," but conversely, that the breaking off of their connection with the West was the cause of their commercial and social decline. Their liturgy, Persian in origin and dating from the Geonic times,[10] still reflects their origins.

The fourth route depended upon two factors, the favour of the Jewish kings of Khazaria and the acquisition of pagan slaves from the Slavonic countries. The Christianisation of the Slavonic countries which took place in the 10th

[6] I, 308. *Enc. of Islam* I, 841. [7] T'sui-Chi, p. 193.
[8] See end of Chapters V and VI for a fuller discussion of this point.
[9] *J.E.* IV, p. 35.
[10] Ibid., p. 38.

century struck a mortal blow at this trade, and almost simultaneously the Jewish kingdom of the Khazars ceased to exist. For the King Joseph, who corresponded with Chasdai ibn Shaprut about 960, was the last Jewish king of the country. Shortly after that exchange of correspondence the kingdom came to an end.[11]

Lastly, the 10th century saw the rise of Venice, which took the place of the Radanites in the Mediterranean trade.[12] The Venetians, as middlemen in the trade between Byzantium and the East, looked upon the Jews as troublesome rivals,[13] and began to take steps to restrain their activity. According to the privileges of Basileus and Constantine in 992, ships' captains were forbidden to take Jewish passengers in their ships on their voyages to the Levant.[14] That the same prohibition was extended to Amalfians and Lombards shows that it was a desire to oust them from the trade which prompted this action. Henceforth, the Radanites lost the monopoly of international trade, and the new young Italian towns of Bari and Venice took their place.[15]

The Radanite trade was at an end. One sole advantage remained to them, the possibility of crossing between the Christian and the Mohammedan worlds, and of this the Jews continued to take advantage. But the glittering prizes of their long journeys were no more, and with the Crusades, which both opened up the East and ousted the Jews from trade, their former activities as international traders came to an end.

[11] *J.E.* IV, p. 6. According to Pollak, however (pp. 9 and 12 and especially pp. 195–205) the Jewish kingdom of Khazaria lasted until the 13th century.
[12] Jacobs, p. 199.
[13] Caro I, p. 193.
[14] Ibid.; Depping, *Histoire du Commerce* II, 22. *J.E.* IV, 189.
[15] Cf. Shipper, V, p. 29.

CHAPTER XXI

CONCLUSION

THE routes of the Radanites have been treated as exhaustively as the meagre sources of the 9th century at my disposal have allowed. We can now see the Radanites against their proper economic and historic background as merchants taking full advantage of the unique circumstances of the time to forge trade links by every available route between France and China. They all emerge as recognised trade routes both before and after their period,[1] but blocked to every other class of traders during the period of their activity.

Although various parts of each of these routes were in regular use, yet in their totality they had ceased to be traversed by merchants for a thousand years before the Radanites, and, after the cessation of their activity, were not reopened for another three centuries.

"Which of the kings of this land before Her Majesty", writes Haklyut, in a panegyric of Queen Elizabeth, "had their banners ever seen in the Caspian Sea? Which of them had ever dealt with the Emperor of Persia as Her Majesty hath done, and attained for her merchants large and loving privileges? Who ever saw before this regiment an English

[1] The first half of the fourth route, across Christian Europe and through Slavonia to Khazaria, appears to be a new one, but only because of the relative paucity of information about European trade routes compared with those of the Arabs. Thus in a Responsum of Eliezer b. Nathan, *c.* 1150, preserved by R. Meir of Rothenburg (ed. Prague, No. 396) we read "the early traders went to Russia for cloaks and other commodities". Compare also the hazards and dangers of the travels of Eldad Ha-Dani and David Reubeni (both of whom I consider more authentic than has been acknowledged hitherto) in those portions of their travels which did not follow recognised trade routes, and the latter portion of those which did.

ligier in the stately porch of the Grand Signor at Constantinople? Who ever found English consuls and agents at Tripolis in Syria, at Aleppo, at Babylon, at Bokhara, and, which is more, who ever heard of an Englishman at Goa before now?"[2] That panegyric could have been applied to the Radanites seven centuries before, the Radanites who, without their banners, went to the Caspian Sea, Persia, Constantinople, Syria, Bokhara, India, and even beyond to China.

Similarly, in her brilliant vindication of the Tartars, Eileen Power writes,[3] "the century from 1245–1345 is of surpassing interest since *for the first time since Alexander the Great* the East and West were open to one another as a result of the Tartar conquests." And again, "the East and West came into direct contact from end to end."

She is speaking of the epoch-making journeys of John of Pian de Carpine (1245–7) and William of Rubruck (1251–4), who, according to her, were the first Europeans to make the land journey across the deserts and mountains of Central Asia,[4] and she says: "to these two friars belongs the imperishable glory of pioneers, for they were the first Europeans to make the land journey to Mongolia and return."[5] So also Beazley[6] speaks of Carpini and Rubruquis "who took advantage of the new routes and new conditions to penetrate further afield than anyone had yet ventured from Christian Europe." That tribute ought, in justice, to be paid to the Radanites who, four centuries before these two intrepid friars, made the journeys from Christian Europe to China and back. It is to them that belongs "the

[2] Hakluyt, quoted by H. A. L. Fisher, *History of Europe*. I have taken the quotation from *The Times Broadsheet*, No. 33.
[3] "Routes to Cathay", in *Travel and Travellers in the Middle Ages*, pp. 124–126.
[4] Page 128. [5] Page 131. [6] *Dawn*, Vol. II. Preface, p. VIII.

imperishable glory of pioneers", and the first Europeans to establish direct contact between West and East were the Jewish merchants of France called Radanites.[7]

Our whole conception of the role of the Jews in the early Middle Ages must be revised. The picture of the European Jew of the 9th and 10th century as an "old clothes man", and a pedlar is as absurd as it is baseless. Such a statement as the following, for instance, made by Pirenne before the existence of the Radanites came to his notice, has to be drastically re-written. "Compared with the efflorescent ubiquity of Italian credit, that of the Jew appears a very small affair, and the part which they played in the Middle Ages has certainly been much exaggerated. In actual fact the more economically advanced a country was, the fewer Jewish moneylenders were to be found there. . . . In Germany their numbers grew with the distance from the Rhine [*sic!*], and in Poland, Bohemia and Hungary they were to be found in great quantities. In the agrarian period of the Middle Ages they acted as pedlars of Oriental goods. Through Moslem Spain, where their coreligionists had early acquired great economic influence, they introduced into Northern Europe spices, precious stuffs and goldsmiths' work. They even seem to have engaged in a clandestine traffic in Christian slaves up to about the end of the 10th century. A certain number of them had acquired land, vineyards and mills in the south of France. But the Church, without persecuting them, always sought to prevent all contact.... At the same time (the First Crusade) the revival of medieval commerce made it possible to dispense with

[7] They used more or less the same routes. Power points out that the Tartar conquest of Persia opened up the route to India via Trebizond—Tabriz—Merv, Bokhara and Samarkand, while their conquest of Russia opened the route to China which, from the 14th century, went via the Sea of Azov, Astrakhan, the Oxus, Bokhara and Samarkand (p. 142). These are the third and fourth Radanite routes.

them as intermediaries with the Levant. . . . Everywhere else (except in Barcelona) the Jews of Western Europe were reduced to mere pawnbroking, lending money at interest on the security of pledges. They were unaffected by the prohibition of usury which applied only to Christians and they profited by, and undoubtedly abused, their freedom. For no one came to their doors save in case of need, and necessity enabled them to exploit their clients as much as they liked. Their connection with their coreligionists not only in Europe but in Islamic lands of the South made it easy for them to procure the ready money they required for their business, and individuals in distress could always obtain assistance from them."[8]

It is of interest to note how markedly this appraisal of the Jews in the international and Oriental trade, as mere hucksters peddling the goods which they obtained from their coreligionists over the Spanish border, differs from that quoted in the second chapter of this work from the same author, apparently after the existence of "those perpetual merchants, the Radanites" had been brought to his attention. It is beyond the scope of this work to point out the grievous misstatements of Pirenne with regard to the activity of the Jew as moneylender and pawnbroker.[9] Although Pirenne suggests it vaguely, he does not sufficiently emphasise the essential point, that these activities began only after the Crusades, when the Jews were ousted from the international trade which had been the main sphere of their activity before that. Deprived of this means of honourable livelihood, forbidden to own land, barred from

[8] Pirenne, *Economic and Social History*, pp. 133–134.

[9] Christians did indulge in moneylending despite the prohibition of the Church, the Jews could not exploit their clients as much as they liked, the rates of interest, admittedly high though they were, being fixed, there is evidence that Christian moneylenders charged higher rates, etc. For all this see J. Parkes, *The Jew in the Medieval Community*.

military service and both merchant and craft gilds[10] they were forced into this only avenue of economic livelihood left to them. Before this, and especially during the period of the Radanites, they were, as Pirenne says elsewhere, the merchants of Europe *par excellence*, the chief middlemen between Europe and Asia,[11] able even to dictate the days on which markets should be held.[12] In the economic field "the period offers the nearest approach to a Jewish monopoly in certain departments of trade which is found anywhere in European history."[13] Instead of peddling Oriental goods brought over the border, they travelled the highways of the world in their search for them, and if, as appears to be the case,[14] they did do a certain clandestine trade in Christian slaves, as stated by Pirenne, they did a large and lucrative and legitimate trade in non-Christian slaves. The omission of this essential fact makes his reference to their participation in this trade meaningless, and in the Radanite period the number of the Jewish moneylenders did not grow but diminished with the distance from the Rhine!

However, that after the 12th century moneylending and pawnbroking became the main occupation of the Jews is an indubitable fact. Where then did the Jews obtain those immense sums which enabled them to become virtually the bankers of Europe? Pirenne feels the need to answer this question, and suggests that "their connection with their coreligionists not only in Europe but in the Islamic lands of the South made it easy for them to procure the ready money which they required for their business." It would

[10] See my *Herem Hayyishub*, London, 1945, chapter I. Is it possible that the impetus behind the formation of the Merchant Gilds was the desire to wrest this trade from the hands of the Jews?

[11] Beazley, *Dawn* I, p. 431.

[12] See chapter I.

[13] Parkes, *Jews and the Medieval Community*, p. 25.

[14] See Chapter XVIII.

be difficult to substantiate this statement. There is not a shred of evidence for any such connection between the Jews of Germany and France on the one hand, and those of Spain on the other, nor indeed any pooling of resources between individual Jews in Christian Europe. If such a fact could be proved, it would be quite the earliest example of banking! Much more reasonable is the interesting suggestion made by Jacobs,[15] that by the time the Radanite activity had ceased "they had amassed that wealth in gold which enabled them to become the bankers of Europe when Europe needed money." That there must have been glittering financial rewards for those who dared these long journeys cannot be doubted, and, as has been pointed out,[16] the picture which Agobard gives of the Jews in Carolingian times is one of wealthy and influential merchants.

What does Europe owe to the Radanites? Jacobs, an authority on the subject, makes the interesting and plausible suggestion that since the Jews were, during this period, the only merchants who visited Mohammedan countries, such Arabic words for commodities and trade terms as found their way into Christian Europe at this time were introduced by the Radanites with these wares. "Judging by these criteria," he writes,[17] "Europe owes to the Jewish Radanites the introduction of oranges and apricots, sugar and rice, Jargonelle pears and Gueldre roses, senna and borax, baelium and asafoetida, sandal-wood and aloes, cinnamon and galingale, mace and camphor, candy and julep, cubebs and tamarinds, slippers and tambours, mattresses, sofas, and calabash, musk and jujube, jasmine and lilac. There is also evidence that some of the more important items of foreign trade came in with the Radanites, as was perhaps natural. Thus the word 'douane' for

[15] Page 199. [16] See Chapter I. [17] Pages 203–204.

custom-house, 'tariff', 'bazaar', 'bale', 'fondac' or 'factory', and 'baggage', all occur early, as well as 'barge', 'barque' and 'sloop' (Lammens). There is also probability that the royal breed of horses in France, known as limousin, introduced in the 9th century, was due to these Jewish merchants . . ."

But we may venture to go a step further. The Jews of the early Middle Ages were carriers not only of goods, but also of the learning of the Arab world to the Christian. We have already noticed two contemporaries of the Radanites who brought, the one an astronomical work, and the other the so-called Arabic numerals from India.[18] It does not seem to be an extravagant supposition that they brought ideas as well as goods, books as well as spices, and that their common fund of language was used, not only to chaffer for their own profit, but to convey the fruit of Arab culture to the Christian world for the profit of mankind as a whole.

[18] Jacob ibn Tarik and Joseph of Spain. See Chapter XIX.

APPENDIX

THE PASSAGE OF IBN AL-FAKIH AL HAMADANI

In the Introduction, note 10, I have given a reference from Jacobs to a mention of the Radanites by Ibn Fakih, stating that I have been unable to confirm it. In response to a request sent by me to an acquaintance in London to look up the passage in the British Museum library, I was informed that the book was not available there.

After the completion of this work, however, I received from Professor L. A. Mayer, Rector of the Hebrew University at Jerusalem, a copy of the passage from the Kitab al-Buldan of Ibn al-Fakih al Hamadani, together with his translation, which runs as follows[1]:

> "To it (viz. to Rhages) come the goods of Armenia and Adharbaijan and Khurasan and the Khazars and the land of Burjan, because the sea merchants travel from east to west, and from west to east. They carry brocades and fine silks from the land of the Franks to al-Farama. Then they go to sea at al-Qulzum and carry (all) this to China. And they carry cinnamon and celandine and all the Chinese goods and sail as far as al-Qulzum. From there they convey it to al-Farama. And these are the Jewish merchants who are called Rahdanis. They speak Persian and Greek and Arabic and Frankish. They leave from al-Farama. Then they sell musk and aloes, wood and everything they have with them to the king of the Franks. Then they go to Antiocha, then to Baghdad, and then to al-Ubulla."

[1] De Goeje, *Bibl. Geog. Arab.*; Leyden, 1885; Vol. V, p. 270, 11, 10–18. I have retained the scientific spelling of Prof. Mayer. Qulzum is, of course, Kolzum; al-Ubulla, al-Obolla, etc.

The author, Ibn al-Fakih Abu Bekr Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Ishak al Hamadani, wrote his Kitab al-Buldan ("Book of Lands") about 903. The original is lost and the quotation is from a compendium from it prepared *circ.* 1022 by Ali b. Hassan al-Shaizari.[2] We do not know, therefore, whether this is the original passage of Ibn Fakih or whether it was abridged by al-Shaizari. It is obvious that it is based upon the original passage of Ibn Khordadbeh, but it nevertheless has some points of special interest.

Ibn Fakih hailed, as his name indicates, from Hamadan, one of the four great cities of the province of Djibal, of which Ibn Khordadbeh was Postmaster-General. It lay on the great Khorasan Road, the next important staging point on which was Ray or Rhages, with which the account of Ibn Fakih opens.[3] He certainly stresses the importance of this town as the centre of trade, and definitely connects it with the Radanites, and it is on this fact, as has been stated,[4] that the assumption has been based that the two names are connected. An examination of the passage hardly bears this out, however. Not only is the "g" of "Rhages" a different letter of the Arabic alphabet from the "d" of Rahdanis,[5] but Ibn Fakih stresses even more than Ibn Khordadbeh the occidental provenance of these merchants.

His reference to Rhages as the commercial centre of the Radanites, however, is of great significance for another reason. When we compare the four routes of Ibn Khordadbeh with those of Ibn Fakih, an interesting fact

[2] *Enc. Islam* II, 375. [3] See Chapter IV. [4] See Chapter XI.

[5] Professor Mayer writes in confirmation as follows: "The 'g' of Rhages is a very different letter from the 'd' in Rahdani. The latter is either the ordinary 'd' as preserved in the spelling Rahdani, or Radani, or the aspirated 'dh' as in one variant Radhani. As you very rightly say, it has nothing to do with the name Rhages, which, in the times of Ibn Khurdadbeh and Ibn Faqih was called Rayy, and of which the Nisba-adjective is Razi. The famous Moslem physician Abu-Bakr ar-Razi (Rhazes of medieval Latin texts) was so called because he was a native of Rayy."

emerges. Route I is given almost completely, except for the unimportant omission of the intermediate stages between Kolzum and China. Of Route II the essentials are given, the land of the Franks, Antioch, Baghdad and al-Obolla. Ibn Fakih finds it unnecessary to mention the obvious fact that from al-Obolla they sailed to China, for which it was the port of departure. When, however, we look for corroborative evidence of the third and fourth routes, the land routes, instead of the detailed description of Ibn Khordadbeh, we are given the sole mention of Rhages, on the Khorasan Road. Rhages, on the other hand, is not mentioned by Ibn Khordadbeh, but it has been pointed out, independently of the passage of Ibn Fakih, that the Radanites must have passed through it.[6] Whereas, however, Ibn Khordadbeh's description of the routes merely presupposes this "passing through", Ibn Fakih suggests that "all roads lead to Rhages". It is made the centre of transport from, *inter alia*, Khazaria, while, according to Ibn Khordadbeh, the Khazar route joined the Khorasan Road well to the east of Rhages, on the east of the Caspian Sea. In other words, Ibn Fakih gives us a picture of the Radanites following a criss-cross pattern of the different routes of the Khorasan Road, in place of the steady west-east and east-west progress suggested by his predecessor. That such a form of travel was used by these merchants has already been suggested in the body of the work; on their return to Farama in the first route, they may have proceeded thence to Constantinople, and, as I have stated, "it is possible that from Constantinople, instead of returning home, they linked up with their fellow merchants in Khazaria, on the fourth route".[7]

[6] See Chapters IV, XIV and XV.
[7] See Chapter XII.

It is possibly for this reason that Ibn Fakih makes no mention of Constantinople, since all the land routes are included in the comprehensive reference to Rhages.

A comparison between the lists of commodities in the two accounts is also instructive. The only commodity from the west mentioned by Ibn Fakih is "brocades and fine silks". He definitely gives their provenance as "the land of the Franks", thus excluding the suggestion that they came from Damascus, and bringing us back to the alternative suggestion that they came from Greece.[8]

On the other hand, his reference to the commodities of the east completely bears out the theory[9] that the spices mentioned by Ibn Khordadbeh are but a haphazard selection from a comprehensive list. Ibn Khordadbeh mentions "musk, aloes, camphor, cinnamon and other products of the eastern countries". Ibn Fakih mentions only "cinnamon, celandine" (not mentioned by Ibn Khordadbeh) "and all the Chinese goods", but when he speaks of their sale to the king of the Franks, he mentions neither cinnamon nor celandine, but "musk and aloes-wood and everything they have with them".

Ibn Fakih mentions four only of the languages of the Radanites. His "Greek" is the same as the "Roman" of Ibn Khordadbeh, and he omits Andalusian and the language of the Slavs.

[8] See Chapter XVII.
[9] Ibid.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Enc. Brit.: *Encyclopedia Britannica.*

Enc. Islam: *Encyclopedia of Islam.*

E.S.H.: Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe.*

J.E.: *Jewish Encyclopedia.*

J.Q.R.: *Jewish Quarterly Review.*
N.S.: New Series
O.S.: Old Series.

S.R.H.: Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews.*

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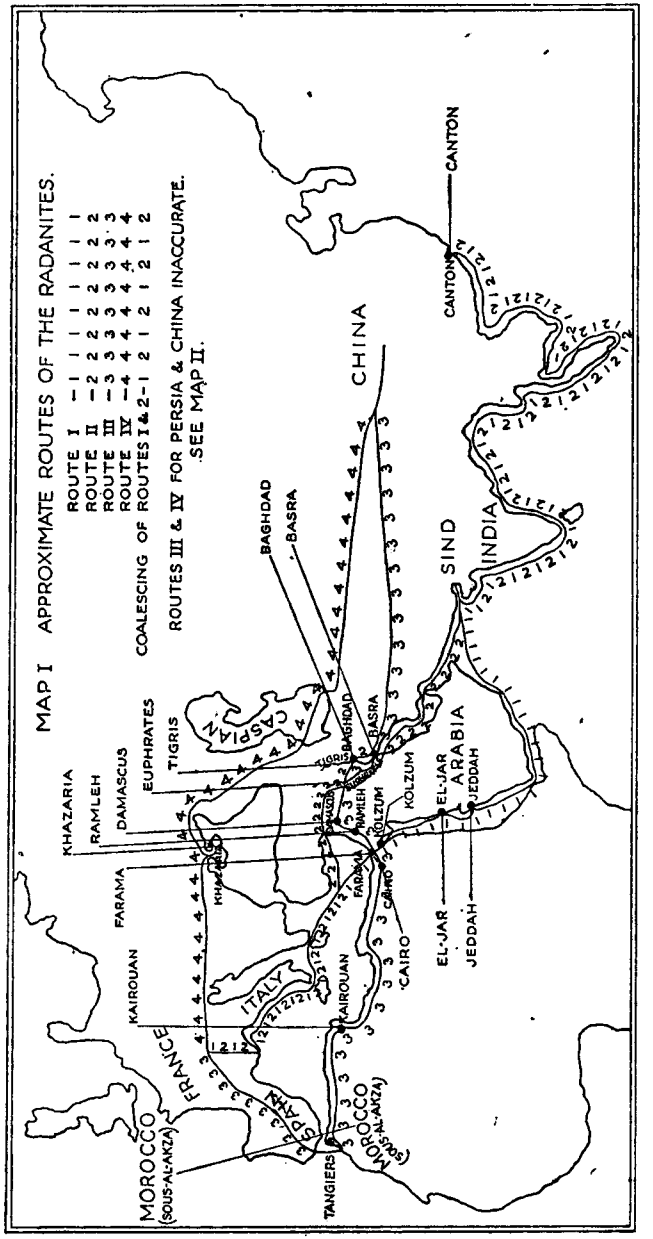

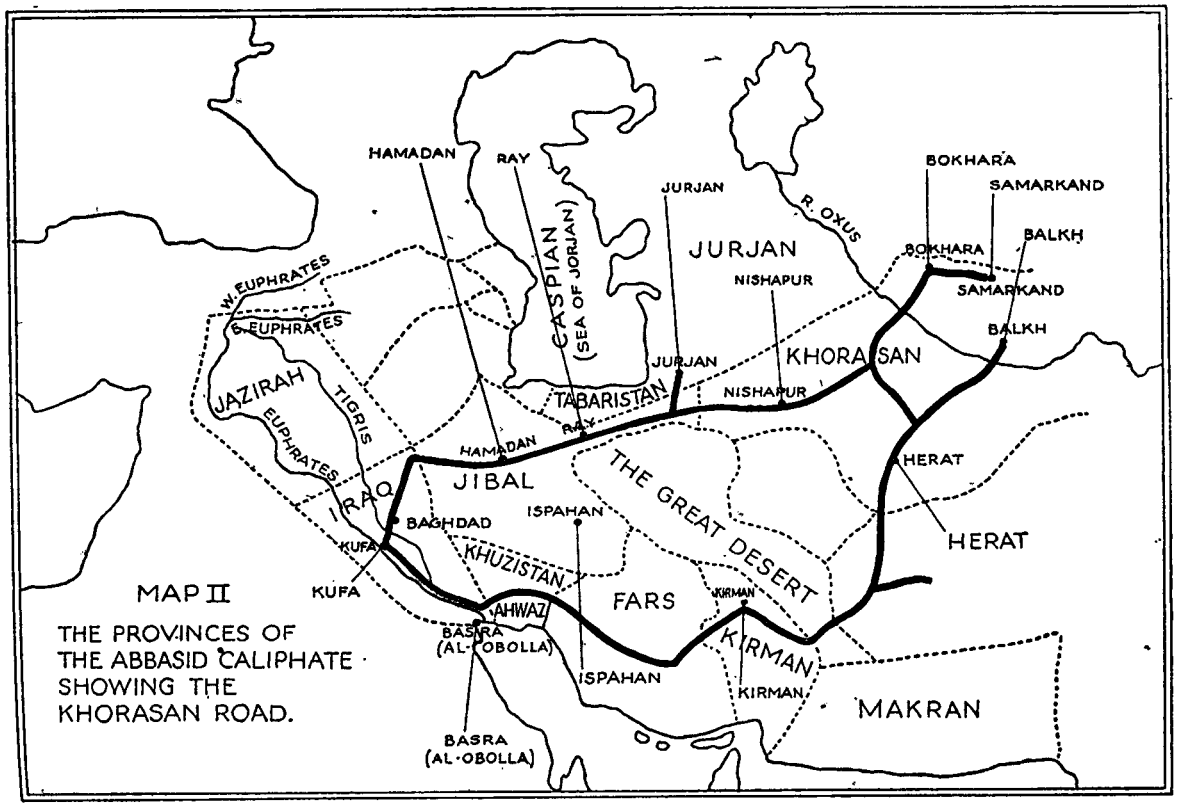

MAP II

THE PROVINCES OF THE ABBASID CALIPHATE SHOWING THE KHORASAN ROAD.